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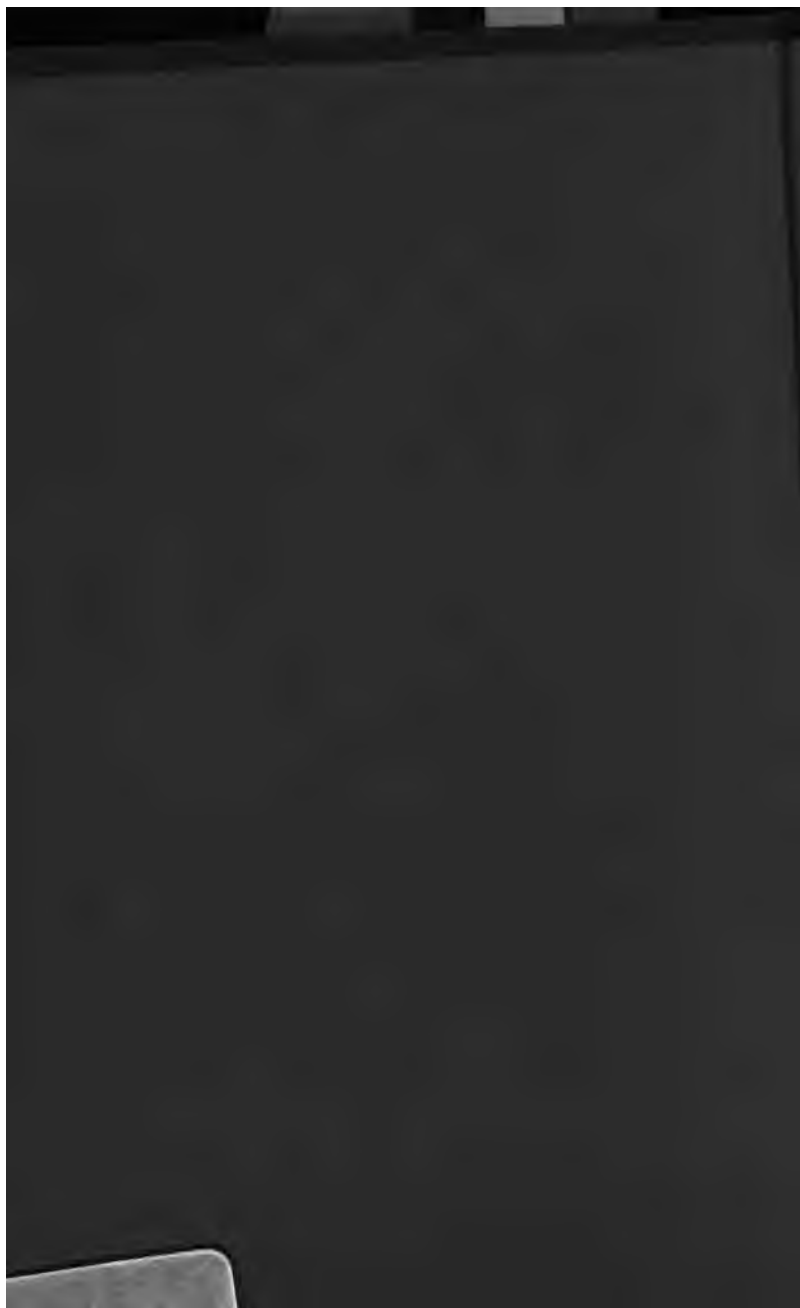
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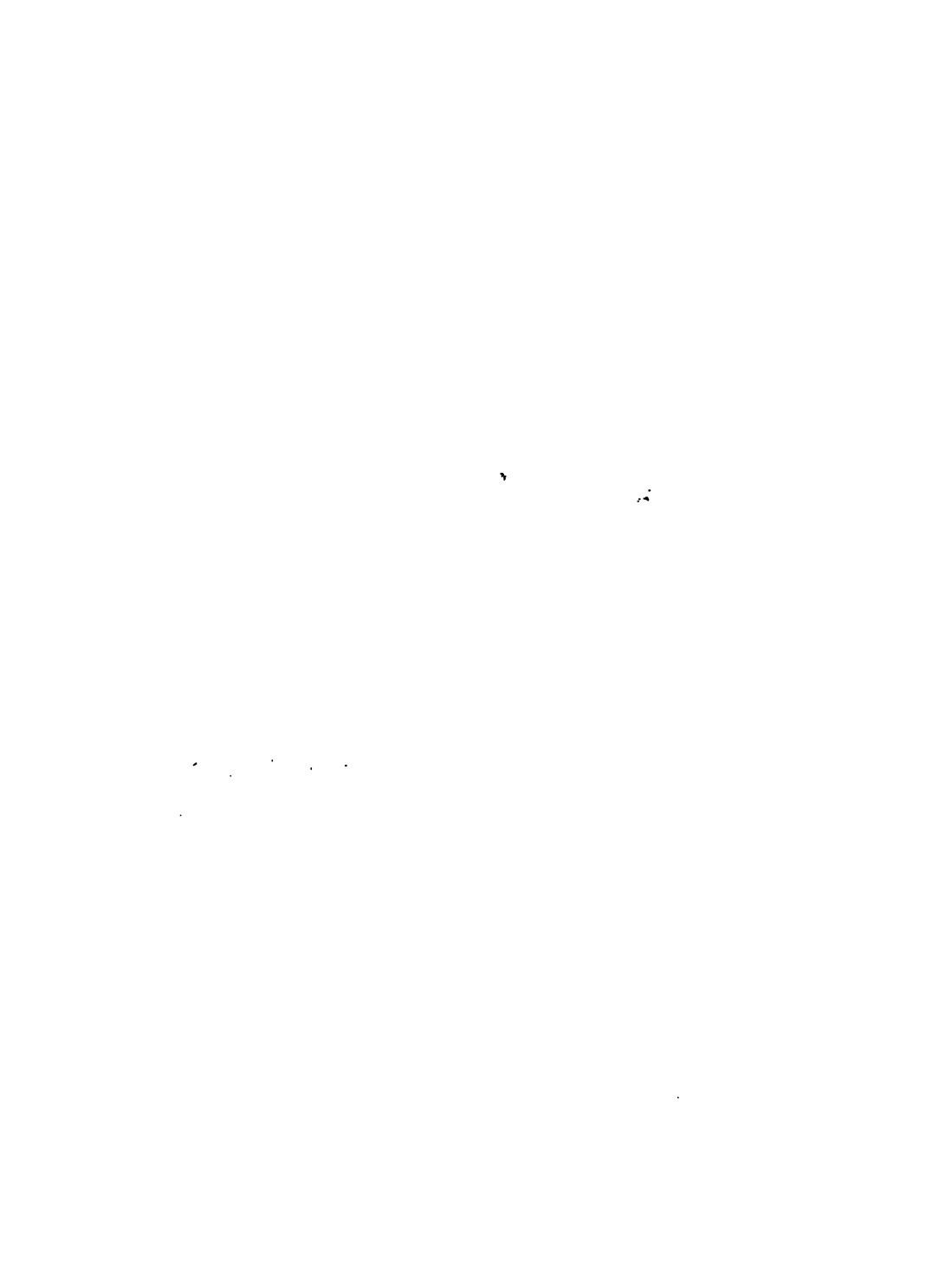
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FAITH IN THE BLESSED GOD:

ITS NATURE, RESULTS, AND REWARD.

A REPRINT (*by request*) OF

19 LECTURES

FROM HIS COMMENTARY

ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

WITH

A PREFACE ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
AND A NOTE ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

BY

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I HAVE not touched the vexed question, scarcely mooted when I first published these Lectures—of the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. The words of the learned Canon Liddon are quite sufficient for my purpose. “At Alexandria, if, as is probable, the “Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed, at St. Paul’s instance *or* “dictation to Christians in that city, there was a disposition to fall “back altogether on Judaism.”

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PREFACE.

IT is by the advice of many Christian friends whose judgment I value, that this reprint has been undertaken. While expressing warm sympathy with the views of the Commentary generally, they have represented to me from time to time that the Lectures on the xith Chapter would make a most useful volume by themselves.

It was not possible from circumstances, to act on these suggestions earlier. Now however, they are carried out. Only I have included Cap xii. 1, 2 in the reprint. For Cap xi. is imperfect in itself. The other two verses are needed to complete the subject.

THESE 19 lectures, it is scarcely necessary to say, have been most carefully and anxiously revised. But in what was written originally, 30 years ago, I have found almost nothing to alter. It is stated in the Commentary everywhere, that our Blessed Lord in assuming humanity, took human life in its entirety—the life of the soul by faith and hope and prayer, as truly as the

life of the body by breath and food and sleep. And the most cursory reader must discern this to be the view presented in the Scripture now before us. In the 11th chapter we have the triumphs of faith and hope in Abel and Abraham and Moses,—men of like passions as we are. And in the second verse of the 12th chapter, we have the triumph of *the same faith and hope* in the life and death and resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ!

No one doubts that our Blessed Lord assumed man's bodily life. Were any to venture on the assertion that the Lord Jesus partook of nourishment and lay down to rest, not that He had Himself any need of doing so, but merely that He might conform to the habitudes of His disciples, he would be condemned by all sound Theologians as re-asserting the heresy of *the Docetas*. But we equally re-assert that heresy if we say that when He looked up to heaven and bowed the knee in prayer, it was not that He needed to do so, but only as their example. For in either case, His manhood was a semblance. HUMILIATION essentially consisted in a Divine Being consenting to man's life of dependence. And INCARNATION essentially consisted in His taking human nature that it might be possible for Him so to do.

ONE word is called for, about Old Testament Scripture. Some who read these lectures, may be surprised at their *eminently conservative* character. I am almost prepared for their saying, it was allowable 30 years ago, before Scholarship had suggested her doubts and made her discoveries, to refer to the histories of Enoch and Abraham, as records of unquestionable truth. But it is very

different now. One professed scholar assures us that there is no reliable history, previous to the attack on Jerusalem by Shishak. And another has stated in the strongest manner that what we call the Books of Moses, are utterly unreliable; that the Book of Deuteronomy was written by the prophet Jeremiah shortly before the captivity, and the Book of Leviticus during the captivity itself! He tells us moreover that any one may convince himself of the truth of all this, and much more like it, who will take the trouble to go into the question. Under these circumstances, it may be said, it is surely the part of wise men at least to suspend their judgment.

How long then are we Christians to wait for our Old Testament? Must we fight over every Book before we venture to call it our own? Very few have learning equal to the task. And as for the entirely unlettered Christian, his faith is destroyed beyond the possibility of recovery.

It appears to me that a previous question demands settlement, and that when that question is settled, our way is cleared.

JESUS OF NAZARETH—WHO WAS HE? WAS HE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, OR WAS HE NOT?

If He was not, there is of course, an end not of the Old Testament only, but of Christianity itself. We must seek for another religion where we can find it. Or, if we cannot find it, we must fall back on blank Atheism. It will be well for us to consider this, and calmly to look at our circumstances.

But if He was what the 18 centuries of the past, and all Christendom of the present, believe Him to have been, the case is

altogether altered. For on a point so vital His judgment is necessarily final.

Let us observe then how the case stands. The volume of the Old Testament, as we now possess it, was *the acknowledged Bible* of the days of our Lord, in which every Jewish parent was careful to instruct his children. "The Christian Year" speaks of our Lord as

"A little child
"taught by degrees to pray,
"By father dear and mother mild
"instructed day by day."

There can be no doubt that these words are true. Mary and Joseph were certainly not behind Lois and Eunice; the holy child would, like Timothy after him, have his infant-understanding stored with Old Testament Scripture. And as childhood developed into youth, this teaching would necessarily be enlarged. We have a most remarkable proof that it was so, in the wondrous scene in the Temple. The youth of 12 years was found "in the midst of "the Doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," (Luke ii. 46). These men were Doctors of the Sacred Law, and there was not one of them who would not have given his life for the full inspiration of all which Moses and the prophets had written. It is superfluous therefore to say that His questions would have reference to this law; He was doubtless asking them to explain many things which to the understanding of a child seemed difficult. And these ancient men were astonished at the depth of that understanding, and the acquaintance with the Sacred

Books which His answers discovered. After this, He went down to Nazareth, and as boyhood developed into early manhood, St. Luke tells us that He "increased in wisdom," (ii. 52). This wisdom was the fruit of meditation on the same sacred oracles. Their records, their doctrines, their counsels, their warnings, had become the staple of His mental food. "I have more understanding" He tells us, "than all my teachers," "I understand more than the ancients"—those very elders at whose feet He had sat in the Temple—"because Thy testimonies are my meditation," (Psalm ciii. 99, 100). And when He came forth at length as the Father's ordained Minister, "a teacher sent from God," I appeal to all who have read that wondrous teaching whether it was not full of Old Testament Scripture from its commencement to its end. The manner moreover in which He refers to these "living oracles" (Acts vii. 38), discovers that thorough acquaintance with them which daily meditation alone can give. They were ready to His hand at any moment. Thus to the Sadducees—"ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures; that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the Bush," (Luke xx. 37). Again, to the Pharisees—"have ye not read so much as this what David did, when he was an hungered?" (Matthew xii. 3). Again—"it is written in your law," (John x. 34); "it is written in the prophets," (John vi. 45); "well did Esaias prophesy," (Matthew xv. 7); "go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," (Matthew ix. 13). Till we come to the wondrous scene in the upper room, where the Risen Christ just about to ascend to the Father, solemnly adopts the Old Testament as His

OWN BOOK. "These are the things" He reminds His disciples "which I spake to you while I was yet with you, that all things "must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in "the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened "He their understandings" adds St. Luke, "that they might understand the Scriptures," (xxiv. 44, 45). In short, if a Book was ever identified with a living Person, the volume of the Old Testament is identified with Jesus of Nazareth. It was *the lesson of His childhood*, and *the study of His youth*, it was *His Text-Book as a Minister*, it contained *His credentials as a Saviour*.* The Person and the Book cannot be dissociated; they stand or fall together.

Scientific men complain of the unscientific language of the Bible. This objection is easily disposed of. God never designed to teach men Natural Philosophy in His word; the inspired writers always use popular phraseology. But what we are now considering, is a totally different matter. The Lord Jesus came into the world for the express object of authenticating former revelations of God, and carrying them on to perfection. And to meet Him on this sacred field, and assail His conclusions as incompetent and untrue, is to deny Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living "God."

But I write as one acknowledging Him in this sacred

* "Then said I, lo, I come, *with the roll of the Book that is "written for Me*"—the Book exhibiting His credentials. Psalm xl. 10. "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged." Macmillan.

character for those who acknowledge Him along with me. And it is on this account I have referred with such unhesitating confidence to these records of the Old Testament. The Lord and Master of us all has set me the example. "THE SON OF THE "LIVING GOD" necessarily knows more of the high and holy errand which brought Him from heaven than all the scholars whom earth has ever produced. On this sacred subject, then, *we may decline to listen to their objections*: a Higher Authority has ruled the case. And

ONE WORD FROM THAT AUTHORITY
OUTWEIGHS THE REASONINGS OF A WORLD.

12, Rue du Lycée,
Pau, October, 1874.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the concluding verses of the tenth chapter of this epistle, the spirit of genuine Christianity has been presented to us in very striking characters. It has been presented as a spirit of JOY. The goods of the Hebrews had been spoiled, and they had taken such spoiling joyfully. It has been presented as a spirit of HOPE. Their joy had its root in hope. They knew in themselves that they had "in Heaven, a better, and "an enduring substance." It has been presented as a spirit of ABIDING CONFIDENCE IN GOD. For the Apostle charges them not to "cast away" such confidence, but under all temptations and in all circumstances to hold it fast to the end. It has "great recompense of reward." "The just" man lives by this "faith," this "confidence." It is the foundation of his hope, it is the source of his joy. Preserving the Christian now in his darkest hours of trial, it brings him to salvation at last.

From all this, the transition is most natural to the eleventh chapter, which presents this faith before us at once in *its nature, its results, and its reward*. The worthies of preceding generations are passed before us in review. They are exhibited as men who believed God; who were taught by that faith, to do His will; and who at last obtained His recompense. And as we pass into the twelfth chapter, first and second verses, another figure appears, bringing up the goodly band, the majestic figure of our Lord and Saviour. We have the faith which triumphed on the Cross, the hope which upheld Him in its agony, the joy which swallowed up its sorrow. How shall we characterize aright a theme so blessed and so glorious! With this brief introduction, let us now consider it in detail.

LECTURE I.

WHAT FAITH IS.

HEBREWS XI. 1—3.

“ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

THESE verses are most important in themselves. They are also the key to the chapter which they introduce; what follows being only a comment on the statements which they contain.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

It is a very common sentiment that faith is another name for fidelity; and that when Scripture says that we are saved by faith, the meaning is that salvation is attained by faithfully serving God. Every example of faith recorded in this chapter, demonstrates this sentiment to be erroneous; it is also condemned by implication in the words before us. Fidelity can never be

“the substance of things hoped for;” it can never be “the evidence of things not seen.” Faith leads indeed to fidelity; but in itself, it is simply BELIEVING SOMETHING TO BE TRUE, ON THE AUTHORITY OF GOD AFFIRMING IT. St. John has shewn this in the plainest manner. He tells us that “this is the victory that “overcometh the world, even our faith;” that “he that “overcometh the world” is “he that believeth that “Jesus is the Son of God;” that three Divine witnesses bear testimony that this is true; that “if we receive “the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, “for this is the witness of God;” and that “he that “believeth” it not, maketh God “a liar, because he “believeth not the witness that God gave of His Son,” (1 John v. 4—10). Now in these words we have the object of faith declared to us, viz. that Jesus is the Son of God. The authority which we have for believing this is also declared, viz. the solemn affirmation of God. Faith and its opposite, unbelief, are then most clearly defined; the one is said to be the belief of this truth on the authority of him who has affirmed it; while the other is said to be the rejection of it, and making him a liar. If this be faith, we can well understand what is declared concerning it in that portion of the text which is now before us. We shall accordingly consider its twofold statement in the light of these words of St. John.

“Things hoped for” are blessings expected but not realized. “We hope for that we see not, but hope “that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why “doth he yet hope for?” (Romans viii. 24, 25). The

ground of this hope is the word and promise of God; He has assured us that He will bestow these blessings, and therefore we expect them. And faith in His word, as is here declared, gives to us the substantial enjoyment of these promised blessings, even now, before they are bestowed. Let us take the most confiding of beings, a little child. He cannot conceive it possible that his parents should deceive him; and so, when they promise any indulgence, he has no doubt that they mean to bestow it. Let us mark the effect on the mind of the child, of this faith in the parental word. From the moment that the promise is made to him, he begins to enjoy by anticipation the expected indulgence; he thinks of it by day, he dreams of it by night. His beaming countenance is the most striking of all comments on the text; we cannot look on it without being convinced that faith is indeed the substantial presence of a promised and expected good. And this is not the case with children only; it is the case with us all. The only thing which interferes with our anticipative enjoyment of any promised good, is when we have some reasonable ground for questioning whether it shall really be bestowed on us. If this is not the case, we yield the mind freely to the happiness of expectation, so that in many instances, when the promised good comes, it disappoints us, and the anticipation proves better than the reality. Now the same principle applies to faith in the Divine promises. We have a striking example of this in the words of our Saviour to the Jews. "Abraham your father," He said, "rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad," (John viii. 56). Abraham did not,

with his bodily eyes, see the day of Messiah ; He was not revealed till many hundred years after the patriarch had slept in peace. But he believed in God's gracious purpose, and the blessings and glories of that day were substantially present, in consequence, to his mental vision ; his faith saw them. He had also that anticipative enjoyment of them, of which we have just spoken ; he rejoiced to see them, he was glad. And we have what is perhaps a still more striking example of this, in what St. Paul declares concerning the blessed God himself. Abraham, he tells us, was "the father of us "all, before him whom he believed, even God, who "quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which "be not as though they were." And he quotes in proof of this, the words of God to Abraham, "I have "made thee a father of many nations," (Romans iv. 16, 17). He does not say, *I will make* thee, but *I have made* thee. Abraham, childless Abraham, was even then, in his sight, the father of many nations ; and the innumerable multitudes of his natural and spiritual seed, were as substantially present to the eye of the Eternal, as if they had been, at that moment, existing on the earth. He therefore called the things which were not, as though they were ; for He knew His own purposes, and was assured of their fulfilment. Now these purposes are declared to us in His word. And if that word therefore is the object of our faith, we also shall learn to call the things which are not, as though they were ; confidence in the Divine veracity, shall impart to future promised good the substantial character of present enjoyment. It was so with the first believers.

"God, who is rich in mercy," says St. Paul, "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians ii. 4—6). For they realized by faith, even on earth, their future exaltation with their Lord; they were conscious, so to speak, of sitting beside Him. And there is no fear, with the Divine promises, of anticipation going beyond reality. When the blessed reality is at length revealed, the most joyful anticipations of the most enraptured believer, shall be left inconceivably behind.

As "the substance of things hoped for," faith has reference to the future only; as "the evidence of things not seen," it has reference to the present also. There are two ways in which we may be made aware of the existence of any thing, viz. by sight or by faith. We may know that the great battle of Waterloo was really fought, because we were present on that memorable and awful occasion. We may know that there is such a country as China, and such a city as Canton, because we have visited China, and walked in the streets of Canton. This is the evidence of sight. But very few of us have such evidence of either of these things. We know that God gave Europe's armed oppressor as the dust to our sword, and as the driven stubble to our terrible artillery, not because we saw it, but because others have reported it to us, and we believe their word. Again, we know that there is such a country as China, and such a city as Canton, though many of us have never set foot beyond the British Isles; others have reported to us the existence of these places, and we

believe their word. This is the evidence of faith; faith in the word of another, is in this case, to use the language of the text, "the evidence" to us, "of things not seen." And in matters of human testimony we do not regard this evidence as secondary, but trust to it as implicitly as to the evidence of sight, and act upon this confidence continually. If we were to determine to act otherwise, and to believe in the existence of nothing but what we ourselves had seen, we must needs go out of the world; for scarcely a day passes over our heads in which we are not constrained, in the most important transactions of life, to trust to faith only. Now what applies to human, applies equally to Divine testimony. None of us has seen God at any time, or can see Him; none of us was an eye-witness of the awful scenes of Calvary; none of us has ever visited the heavenly world, or can tell from personal observation what is passing there. How then can we assure ourselves that God really loves us? that the blood of His dear Son was shed for us on the bitter cross? that it is now presented on high, and that it procures for us the remission of sin? The answer is obvious; God declares these things to be true, and His word is our evidence of them. And it is a sufficient evidence; "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." This then is faith. We see therefore the perfect harmony between St. John and the text before us. The one Apostle teaches us that faith is receiving God's witness; the other defines it as the substantial enjoyment, even now, of His glorious promises, and the confidence of the soul in the truth of His declarations of grace.

St. Paul makes his meaning yet plainer; for in the last verse of the text to which we shall now turn our attention, he gives a practical illustration of it.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

He appeals to their consciences and experience, and to ours also. We understand, he says, that the worlds were framed by the word of God; i.e. that the visible creation, sun, moon, and stars, earth and ocean, plants and animals, were not formed out of pre-existent matter, but were called out of nothing by the fiat of Omnipotence. But how do we know that this was indeed the case? Where were we when God laid the foundations of the earth? when He shut up the sea with doors? when He made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness its swaddling band? when the morning stars sang together over His completed creation, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job xxxviii. 4—9). We were then in our original nothingness. We are not indebted to sight then for this knowledge and understanding; none of us were eye-witnesses of any of these stupendous facts. As little are we indebted to philosophy. Professing themselves to be wise on this subject, the wisest of the heathen become fools, (Romans i. 22). We are indebted to God's word. He has given to us His living oracles, and in these oracles we read that "God created the heavens and the earth;"—that "God said, let there be light, and there was

“light;”—that He “said, let the waters be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry-land appear: and it was so;”—that He “said, let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night;”—that “He made the stars also,” (Genesis i. 1—16). And reading these things in God’s word, we believe them on God’s authority. **THIS IS FAITH.** We have not the shadow of a doubt concerning these glorious facts of Creation, though we have no evidence of them whatever but the bare affirmation of God. And the same confidence in his veracity—the same faith, when the blessed truths and promises of redemption are its object, is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

He would shew to them and to us also the power of this blessed principle,—

For by it the elders obtained a good report.

“The elders” of whom he here speaks, were the worthies of all preceding generations, from righteous Abel down to the coming of Messiah. He does not dismiss them with so brief a reference, but enlarges on their history to the close of this long chapter, taking leave of them at the end of it, with the same testimony which he here bears to their worth. The name “elders” is peculiarly appropriate. To use the language of the poet, they were “the world’s grey fathers;” and their names and histories are enshrined among the records of hoary antiquity. In the few words which are here devoted to them, two things appear; and these two

things, as illustrative of the power of faith, are worthy of our most earnest attention.

I. They "obtained a good report." This was not the good report of man. Wealth, honour and advancement wait on that good report; but "they were stoned, "they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain "with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins "and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; "they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in "dens and caves of the earth. The world was not "worthy" of their goodness: for man knew not how to value it, (verses 36—38). But they obtained something better than his favour, even THE GOOD REPORT OF GOD. He esteemed what man despised; he also expressed that esteem, and has left the expression on record. Let us glance at the history of these elders, that we may discern the truth of this remark. Abel, Enoch, and Noah, are the first names in the honourable roll. And God in His inspired word, has solemnly recorded His approval of each of these sainted men. He has told us of Abel, that when he came with his brother Cain to offer sacrifice, "the Lord had respect "unto Abel and to his offering," (Genesis iv. 4). He has told us of Enoch, that he "walked with God three "hundred years," (Genesis v. 22); and of Noah, that he "was a just man and perfect in his generations," and that he "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," (Genesis vi. 8, 9). Moreover in each of these cases, the Divine approbation was expressed to him who had obtained it. It was expressed to Abel, in the acceptance of his

sacrifice; to Enoch, in his translation to glory; and to Noah, in his deliverance from the flood. Following the stream of this inspired discourse, we come next to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Time would fail me were I to attempt to recount the many testimonies borne by God in His word to His faithful servant Abraham. Let it suffice that I refer to two of the most remarkable. We find "the Judge of all the earth" saying on the eve of Sodom's fall, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" He also gave His reason for thus admitting a mortal to share His secret counsels; and what a testimony to Abraham does that reason contain! "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," (Genesis xviii. 19). And He bore the same testimony from heaven, when the patriarch at His command was preparing to offer his son on the altar. "Now I know that thou fearest God;" and "by myself have I sworn, that in blessing I will bless thee," (Genesis xxii. 12, 16, 17). Surely this was obtaining a good report, the only good report which is worthy of a moment's desire. And Isaac and Jacob were heirs in this, as in all other respects, to Abraham's blessing. After father, son, and grandson had for ages slept in peace, we find God declaring Himself to Moses, as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; yea proclaiming this as the name by which He should for ever be known, (Exodus iii. 15). The Hebrews needed no one to remind them of the distinction thus conferred on the fathers of their nation; and they gloried in the remembrance that God had called that nation "the seed of

"Abraham my friend," (Isaiah xli. 8). Nor did they need to be reminded of the good report of another of these elders, their own illustrious Moses. No Hebrew could forget the memorable words "My servant Moses "is faithful in all mine house," (Numbers xii. 7); or could forget that it was written in the imperishable record of inspiration, that when the cloudy pillar descended at the tabernacle-door "the Lord spake unto "Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend," (Exodus xxxiii. 11). They were also aware that in the same inspired record, God had borne testimony to the holy boldness of Barak and Gideon, of Jephthae and Samson; to the righteousness of Samuel; to the zeal and piety of David; and to the courage and constancy with which many of His servants the prophets had submitted to exile, torture, and death, for the love which they bore to His name. The Hebrews must therefore have been perfectly conscious of the truth of the statement before us; their own Scriptures told them that those to whom St. Paul was now referring, had obtained the approbation of God.

II. The way in which they obtained it, is also declared; it was by faith. They believed in God's mercy and trusted in His promises. And this faith enabled them to do His blessed will, in spite of every obstacle and hindrance, as we shall see more fully when we examine their histories in detail. When we consider that they were the few righteous in the midst of the many wicked, we may be assured that these obstacles and hindrances were of the most serious and appalling

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assured that we had faith, they say, we should have no doubt of God's love and mercy. The error of this is manifest in the light of the preceding exposition. The love and mercy of God are the objects of faith, the very things in which we are to believe. And our knowledge of them and consequent confidence in God, must not be derived from previous knowledge of ourselves; it must flow directly from those words of unspeakable compassion which the loving and merciful One has been pleased to address to us in His gospel. This is faith; the substance of the future, as well as the evidence of the present. Believing in our Saviour's love, we love Him again, and long for His appearing. And the blessed hope of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge has promised to as many as love that appearing, lifts our affections above a present world, and imparts to us, even on earth, a foretaste of the joys of heaven. We are preserved moreover, by this faith and hope, amid the changes and chances, the perils and temptations of time, and shall be brought by it at last to the vision of God's glory in eternity.

The love and mercy of God toward us are not occasioned then by our faith. Faith on our part is the reception of them; and receiving them, we live: unbelief is their rejection; and rejecting them, we die. As little are they occasioned by our repentance; "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance," (Romans ii. 4). That goodness has no cause but itself: love is the law of God's being; "GOD IS LOVE." The gospel is the revelation of this goodness of the Invisible in Jesus Christ His Son. And to believe on Christ is to appre-

hend this glorious revelation. "This is life eternal," says our Lord Himself in solemn prayer to the Father, "that they might know Thee the only true God, and "Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," (John xvii. 3).

We have been instructed also, by the text, in the results and recompense of faith. It must, from its very nature, lead to such results and to such a recompense. God's approbation is necessarily attached to it; He has commanded us to cast ourselves on His mercy in Christ Jesus, and the acceptance with which we are greeted in doing so, is in terms of His own word. This faith will also, of necessity, teach us, as it taught those of whom we have been speaking, to do God's will and to glorify His name. St. Paul tells us elsewhere that it "worketh by love," (Galatians v. 6), and teaches to "live soberly, righteously, and godly," as Christ's "peculiar people, zealous of good works," (Titus ii. 12—14). And such a life will in its turn, lead to a blessed recompense; the gracious Saviour cannot and will not forget the service which we thus render to Him. He did not forget the services of these elders: the text reminds us that they had been rewarded with His eternal approbation solemnly recorded in His word. Who can express the honour which has thus been conferred on them! Generation after generation of the Church has heard their names, and read Christ's account of their honourable deeds. And this is but a small thing; their record is on high. The angels before the throne have heard of their love, their labours, and their sufferings; yea God the Father has bent His ear to listen. We have the promise of the same recompense; Jesus says to him

that overcometh, "I will confess his name before my "Father, and before His angels," (Revelation iii. 5). And if the rapturous word, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is at last addressed to us by Him, it shall make us forget for ever the disappointments and sorrows of time, and all that we have endured for His sake. Let us covet this distinction then, let us set our hearts on this DEATHLESS HONOUR. Men of like passions with ourselves have obtained it, and it is still THE PRIZE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. God grant of His infinite mercy that it may be the attainment of us all !

LECTURE II.

FAITH OF ABEL.

HEBREWS XI. 4.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

WE learned from the subject of the last lecture, that faith is at once the evidence of things not seen, and the substantial presence of things hoped for: we were also reminded that by the exercise of this grace and by its fruits appearing in their lives, the worthies of earlier generations obtained God's good report. The rest of this chapter is devoted to historical examples, illustrative of both these truths. The first selected by St. Paul, as we have just read, is that of Abel. Having referred to our knowledge of the creation of the world in illustration of the nature of faith, he goes back to the very commencement of human society, for examples, at once of its nature and of the blessed recompense which it infallibly secures. His words suggest three subjects of consideration. We inquire, first, how faith made the offering of Abel more excellent than that of Cain:

second, how Abel obtained witness that he was righteous; and third, of what it is that this servant of God, "being dead, yet speaketh" to us. Our answer to the first inquiry will discover the truth of the Apostle's definition of faith; our answer to the second will establish the statement that the Divine approbation is obtained by it: while in answer to the third we shall find that these are the two all-important subjects on which martyred Abel is instructing us from the tomb.

I. The first thing which arrests our attention when we begin to consider the text, is the statement that *both Cain and Abel* offered a sacrifice to God. We are arrested by the same statement when we turn to the book of Genesis, where we read that "in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Now St. John tells us that Cain "was of that wicked one," and that "his works were evil," (I John iii. 12). We should rather therefore have expected to read that Abel drew near to sacrifice to the Lord, but that Cain scornfully refused to accompany him. Such however was not the case, they both drew near. And if we had watched them on that eventful morning as they built their altars and prepared their offerings and bowed the knee, our eye probably could have discovered no difference between the acceptable and the unacceptable worshipper. But the eye of God discerned a difference; He "had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He

“had not respect.” In what then consisted this difference? Was Cain deficient in sincerity, or in devotion? No; as far as we know, his sincerity and devotion were equal to his brother’s. If it had been otherwise, if he had been either a hypocrite, or a mere formalist, we should not have read, that when God rejected his offering he “was very wroth, and his countenance fell,” (Genesis iv. 5). The text tells us wherein he was deficient, he lacked faith. He was a sincere and devout but still a self-righteous worshipper. And let us learn from this, that wickedness of heart does not always shew itself in refusal to worship God. Neither does it prove that we are accepted in our worship, because we draw nigh with sincerity and devotion; for unless we add faith, the Lord will not accept us. We have already learned what faith is; and by carefully examining this historical illustration of it, we may, by God’s help, apprehend its nature more fully.

Both faith and unbelief imply previous instruction; a man can neither believe nor disbelieve a testimony of which he has never heard. The statement of the text concerning these two sons of Adam, implies that both of them had been instructed in the way of approach to God; but whilst the one reverently believed that he was taught, the other presumptuously rejected it. Their mother Eve was doubtless the instructor of their childhood; and their father Adam, of their maturer years. Our first parents indeed did not know Divine truth as we know it; but still enough was revealed to save the soul that believed it. Their own experience told them that they had been, at the first, created upright, and

that before sin had come between them and their Creator, they had free access into His sacred presence. They knew from God's own mouth, that by their fatal trespass they had brought down His wrath at once on themselves and on their posterity ; and they must have known that both they and their children were adding to that wrath by the transgressions of every hour. The depravity of heart which the fall had entailed, must have been with them a matter of consciousness ; and it could not possibly escape their observation that this depravity was communicated to their offspring ; that their children were in their own likeness, and after their own image, (Genesis v. 3). But though thus conscious of their fall from God, and eye-witnesses daily of the results of that terrible catastrophe, they were not without hope ; God had said that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He had also intimated, however darkly, that this bruising should be effected through an expiation for human guilt, and man's consequent forgiveness and reconciliation to Himself. For He had put aside the fig-leaves which they had sewed together to cover their nakedness, and making coats of skins, He had clothed them with His own hand, (Genesis iii. 7, 21). These coats of skins must have been furnished by animals slain in sacrifice ; for animals, at that early period, were not used for food. It is equally evident that these sacrifices must have been of God's appointment ; and as He directed them to slay the animal, and to clothe themselves with its skin, He would surely instruct them in the meaning of these symbolical acts. The sacrifice and clothing together would thus be to their faith the

sacrifice ; to Enoch, in his translation to glory ; and to Noah, in his deliverance from the flood. Following the stream of this inspired discourse, we come next to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Time would fail me were I to attempt to recount the many testimonies borne by God in His word to His faithful servant Abraham. Let it suffice that I refer to two of the most remarkable. We find "the Judge of all the earth" saying on the eve of Sodom's fall, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ?" He also gave His reason for thus admitting a mortal to share His secret counsels ; and what a testimony to Abraham does that reason contain ! "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," (Genesis xviii. 19). And He bore the same testimony from heaven, when the patriarch at His command was preparing to offer his son on the altar. "Now I know that thou fearest God ;" and "by myself have I sworn, that in blessing I will bless thee," (Genesis xxii. 12, 16, 17). Surely this was obtaining a good report, the only good report which is worthy of a moment's desire. And Isaac and Jacob were heirs in this, as in all other respects, to Abraham's blessing. After father, son, and grandson had for ages slept in peace, we find God declaring Himself to Moses, as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; yea proclaiming this as the name by which He should for ever be known, (Exodus iii. 15). The Hebrews needed no one to remind them of the distinction thus conferred on the fathers of their nation ; and they gloried in the remembrance that God had called that nation "the seed of

"Abraham my friend," (Isaiah xli. 8). Nor did they need to be reminded of the good report of another of these elders, their own illustrious Moses. No Hebrew could forget the memorable words "My servant Moses "is faithful in all mine house," (Numbers xii. 7); or could forget that it was written in the imperishable record of inspiration, that when the cloudy pillar descended at the tabernacle-door "the Lord spake unto "Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend," (Exodus xxxiii. 11). They were also aware that in the same inspired record, God had borne testimony to the holy boldness of Barak and Gideon, of Jephthae and Samson; to the righteousness of Samuel; to the zeal and piety of David; and to the courage and constancy with which many of His servants the prophets had submitted to exile, torture, and death, for the love which they bore to His name. The Hebrews must therefore have been perfectly conscious of the truth of the statement before us; their own Scriptures told them that those to whom St. Paul was now referring, had obtained the approbation of God.

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Both faith and unbelief imply previous instruction; a man can neither believe nor disbelieve a testimony of which he has never heard. The statement of the text concerning these two sons of Adam, implies that both of them had been instructed in the way of approach to God; but whilst the one reverently believed that he was taught, the other presumptuously rejected it. Their mother Eve was doubtless the instructor of their childhood; and their father Adam, of their maturer years. Our first parents indeed did not know Divine truth as we know it; but still enough was revealed to save the soul that believed it. Their own experience told them that they had been, at the first, created upright, and

that before sin had come between them and their Creator, they had free access into His sacred presence. They knew from God's own mouth, that by their fatal trespass they had brought down His wrath at once on themselves and on their posterity ; and they must have known that both they and their children were adding to that wrath by the transgressions of every hour. The depravity of heart which the fall had entailed, must have been with them a matter of consciousness ; and it could not possibly escape their observation that this depravity was communicated to their offspring ; that their children were in their own likeness, and after their own image, (Genesis v. 3). But though thus conscious of their fall from God, and eye-witnesses daily of the results of that terrible catastrophe, they were not without hope ; God had said that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He had also intimated, however darkly, that this bruising should be effected through an expiation for human guilt, and man's consequent forgiveness and reconciliation to Himself. For He had put aside the fig-leaves which they had sewed together to cover their nakedness, and making coats of skins, He had clothed them with His own hand, (Genesis iii. 7, 21). These coats of skins must have been furnished by animals slain in sacrifice ; for animals, at that early period, were not used for food. It is equally evident that these sacrifices must have been of God's appointment ; and as He directed them to slay the animal, and to clothe themselves with its skin, He would surely instruct them in the meaning of these symbolical acts. The sacrifice and clothing together would thus be to their faith the

most beautiful foreshewing of Christ the expiation for iniquity, and the bringer in of that everlasting righteousness in which the guilty were to find acceptance with God. They saw these things indeed "as through a glass, darkly." But still they knew enough to encourage them, as they laid their sacrifices on God's altar, to confide in His pardoning mercy, and expect His gracious acceptance of themselves and of what they brought. Now all this knowledge of themselves, of God, and of the way of approach to Him, whether derived from personal experience or the result of Divine teaching, would doubtless be communicated by our first parents to Cain their first-born and to Abel his brother. But Cain rejected what they taught him, whilst Abel reverently received it. I do not see, Cain replied, why I should be cursed on account of my father's sin; neither do I see that any sins of my own deserve so dreadful a recompense. My father tells me too that my heart is very wicked, but I am not conscious of this wickedness. Far be it from me to be regardless of God or of His worship. He is very good; I owe to His goodness life and all its comforts, and it is through His blessing that my land brings forth its increase. He deserves therefore to be acknowledged as a gracious and bountiful Creator, and I will acknowledge Him as such, with all devotion and sincerity: but as to confessing myself a miserable sinner and putting my trust in the blood of atonement, I do not understand what these things mean. We may well put this language into Cain's mouth; it was the language of his behaviour. He "brought of "the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord," an

offering which acknowledged indeed a Creator's kindness, but implied neither confession of his own sinfulness, nor recognition of a Redeemer's love. Blessed be God, was on the other hand the language of Abel, that He has provided a Saviour to redeem us from our father's guilt and from our own ! Blessed be God that unclean and depraved as I am, I have access to Him through that Saviour ! I will go then into His presence and take in my hand a sacrifice. It shall be a token of my faith in the Lamb which He shall yet provide, and that I, as a creature accursed by transgression, look for acceptance through that provision of His mercy ; it shall be my cheerful acknowledgement that, in return for His redeeming love, I consecrate myself, with the best that I have, to His service and glory. And acting upon this godly purpose, Abel "took of the firstlings "of his flock and of the fat thereof." If we had only the book of Genesis to guide us, we might not have been able thus to interpret his act ; but the statement of the text, that he presented his sacrifice in faith, makes its meaning abundantly plain. And in this act of Abel accordingly, we discern faith to be what St. Paul has defined it, viz. "the substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen." The word of God was then the only evidence that He would, in the fulness of time, provide a Lamb for a burnt-offering ; and ages were to roll over the world, before this purpose was to find its accomplishment. The propitiation of Christ moreover, which we now look back upon as finished and perfected, was in the days of Abel, among the things hoped for. And God seems to have instituted sacrifice

to give a substantial character to this hope. For the presence of the victim before the bodily eyes of the believing offerer, enabled him to keep the great propitiation which it typified, steadily before the eye of faith. In this temper of mind then, these two brothers drew near to God. The book of Genesis simply intimates the Divine judgment on them and on their offerings, but the text, as we have seen, lifts the veil, and discovers the reason of that judgment. With all his sincerity and devotion, self-righteous Cain was rejected; whilst believing Abel, through self-renunciation, found the grace which he was seeking. We need not inquire further; it could not possibly be otherwise. As God will not suffer Himself to be mocked by those who presume to come to Him in ways of their own; so neither can He mock any who come to Him in unfeigned reliance on the mercy which He has revealed.

II. The text declares that God manifested on the spot, His judgment of these two brothers; it declares also the manner in which this was done. Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." We have frequent examples in Old-Testament Scripture, of the way in which this was done. The fire of God fell and consumed the sacrifice. We read that on the day of Aaron's consecration, when he and Moses his brother came down from offering the sacrifices appointed for that solemnity, "there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat," (Leviticus ix. 24). And we are told that on the day of the consecration of

the temple, "when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices," (II Chronicles vii. 1). It is also specially noticed that on both occasions, as if to declare the meaning of this act, "the glory of the Lord appeared." There is another example of the same thing in Old-Testament history; and perhaps it is more striking than either of the cases now referred to. Elijah sought to recover apostate Israel from their idolatry; and a solemn assembly was, by Ahab's command, convened on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal, as had been agreed on, prepared their altars, presented their offerings, and besought their god to intimate his acceptance of them. But they besought in vain; there was none to answer them. God's solitary prophet prepared his altar in the next place; and having presented his offering, called on the name of the Lord. And the answer was immediate; "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, "and licked up the water that was in the trench," (I Kings xviii. 38). Such was God's method on all solemn occasions, of testifying His acceptance of the gifts presented to Him. And the Hebrews to whom this was well known, would naturally understand from the language employed in the text, that it was so in the case of Abel. We have every reason to suppose the same; and it throws great light on the history of the transaction, as recorded in the book of Genesis. The two brothers, as I conceive, having prepared their altars and presented their offerings, knelt in reverence

before the Lord; and after solemn silence for a space, His fire fell from heaven, and consumed the offering of the younger, leaving that of the elder untouched. Abel, rising from prayer, would return to his home, filled doubtless with joy and thankfulness: and with respect to his brother, we can well understand the statement that "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." The case of Abel then, besides being an example of the nature of faith, is an example also of its recompense, verifying the apostolic statement that the Divine approbation is obtained by it. For it scarcely requires to be pointed out that to obtain witness that we are righteous, and to obtain a good report, are one and the same thing.

Righteousness alone can obtain the approbation of God. And we are instructed from the text in the nature of righteousness, and how it can be found in a fallen creature. Abel, we are told, believed in the great propitiation, and obtained by doing so, witness that he was righteous. We speak of *self-righteousness*, but in very truth there is no such thing. For the man who is not relying unfeignedly on the sacrifice and work of Christ, has in the sight of God, no righteousness at all. Uprightness, benevolence, and other good moral qualities may be found in his character, but he lacks the first element of righteousness; for its first element is faith in Jesus. Let us not however misunderstand this; let us not suppose for a moment, that our faith is our righteousness, i. e. that it possesses some merit in the eyes of God. The very idea of such a thing, the ascription for an instant of any merit to

faith, is the most singular of all proofs of man's tendency to self-dependence. For the essence of faith is self-renunciation; we acknowledge in believing, that we have no claim on God for any thing but wrath, and that for our pardon now and hope of glory hereafter, we are entirely indebted to His sovereign mercy. Would we then be righteous, this is the way of righteousness. Let us depart from this narrow way to the right hand or to the left; let us make our good works on the one hand, or our faith on the other, (for it matters not,) our ground of confidence toward God; and in doing so we depart from righteousness.

III. And of all the precious truths which we have now been considering, Abel, "being dead, yet speaketh." Abel is dead: Cain slew him ere he had lived half his days. And perhaps the enemy who stirred up Cain to slay him, thought when he saw him dead, that the influence of his pious example would be felt no more. But God, in this as in every instance, has made the malice of that enemy to defeat itself; for He has caused the history of His righteous servant's martyrdom to be recorded in His inspired word. And thus, though the tomb so early closed on him, his voice has been heard issuing from it through all past ages; yea it issues from it still, and will do so until the end of time. He was God's first martyr, sealing with his blood the blessed truth of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, and acceptance with God through faith in His precious name. On these things he spake to the Hebrews; on these things he still speaks to us.

The Hebrews were then persecuted by their unbelieving countrymen, for their faith in a crucified Redeemer; and they were themselves, through the force of Jewish prejudices, strongly tempted to forsake that faith. But Abel speaks to you from the tomb, says the Apostle, and bids you adhere to it. It was his own faith. His offering was more excellent than that of Cain, because he believed in the Lamb of God, yet to be slain for sinners. And "by it," i. e. by that offering and its acceptance, he points out to you the way of acceptance and salvation. Your countrymen persecute you for this faith, because it offends their self-righteousness. They "have a zeal of God" indeed, they are not deficient either in sincerity or in devotion; but it is "not according to knowledge," for they are "ignorant of God's righteousness," and go about "to establish their own." (Romans x. 2, 3.) Cain hated and persecuted Abel for the very same cause. He thought his heart and life so good, that they did not need the washing of atoning blood; but he soon gave awful proof of the passions which raged within, for he became a foul murderer. And so it is, alas, with our countrymen. They imagine that they are righteous, and yet they have "both killed the "Lord Jesus and their own prophets" (I Thessalonians ii. 15), and are now persecuting you with murderous violence. But Abel bids you not regard their violence. He says to you from the tomb, I was sent hither indeed before my time by the bloody hand of a wretched brother, but my sacrifice was accepted, and I have entered into rest, waiting in the bosom of

God for the day of the resurrection of the just. Follow his example, St. Paul would say, and yield yourselves to be slain by your self-righteous brethren, if such be the will of God. For if ye be slain with Abel, for the name of Christ, oh then, happy are ye !

And though we are not persecuted like the Hebrews, Abel has the same word for us. Our natural ideas of religion are utterly astray. We know that we are the creatures of God, and that He is entitled to our services ; but we have no idea that our obedience must begin by suing for and obtaining deliverance from His wrath. We believe Him to be a merciful Creator who is not extreme to mark our frailties, failings, and shortcomings ; who graciously accepts our sincere endeavours to please Him ; and when we do seriously amiss, sets the good which we have done against the evil, and overlooks the one for the sake of the other. And as long therefore as our consciences do not charge us with any very flagrant breach of His commandments, we trust that we are accepted with Him, and on the way to a happy immortality. Now on this it is enough to say that it is, in all respects, *THE RELIGION OF CAIN*. Let no one startle at the expression, or ask in astonishment, how I can speak of a murderer's religion ! For I speak of Cain as he was on the memorable morning to which the text refers, and he was no murderer then ; yea as far as we know, he was unstained with any vice. Had it been otherwise, had Cain been then a reckless profligate, we should not have read of his preparing his altar, and presenting his offering to the Lord. I have

already explained that he was at that period a sincere but a self-righteous man. He acknowledged God as a Creator, and professed gratitude for His benefits and willingness to be His servant; but the acknowledgment went no farther, he disowned Him as a Redeemer. And hence, alas, the rest of his mournful history. Meeting no acceptance in his worship at the hand of Him who smiled so graciously on his believing brother, he became maddened with rage and jealousy; and having first stained his hand with that brother's blood, hid his dishonoured head and ended his dishonoured days in the land of Nod, i. e. *of the vagabond*, an outcast from the presence of the Lord. (Genesis iv. 3—16.) Let every self-righteous professor then, every one whose views of religion are those described above, read this history and tremble. Let him read in it the real character of that heart which he imagines to be so good, and the real value of that religion in which he boasts. It needs only that his pride be offended by a discovery of the Divine purity and of his own depraved and lost condition, to make the whole unrenewed nature within him, rise like that of Cain, in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven.

How very different from these our natural ideas of religion, are the revelations of the holy gospel! It begins by telling us that the cord which bound us to God originally, has been snapped asunder by our sin; that we are now, by nature and by practice, outcasts from His favour. We are so by nature; the human family is attainted in its great ancestor's rebellion; "by the offence of one," says St. Paul, "judgment

"came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans v. 18). Death, that dreadful visitation from which none of us can flee, is from generation to generation, the sign of this attainder; it was "*by one man*," the same Apostle teaches us, that "sin entered into the world and death by sin;" "and so," he goes on to reason, "death passed upon all men, *in whom* all have sinned." (Romans v. 12. Original, Wicliff and Rheims.) And we are so by practice, for we have added to this original offence our own actual transgressions. There is indeed a great difference between man and man in the number and magnitude of their offences; but we are expressly told by St. Paul that in one respect "there is no difference," that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans iii. 22, 23.) As the sinful children therefore of a sinful father we lie under a twofold condemnation, and our ruin is complete. As far as our own efforts to help ourselves can avail, our condition is past redemption, yea, it is past hope.

If the revelations of the gospel had stopped here, it had been better for us never to have heard them. Ignorance would in such a case, have been happiness; it would have been "folly to be wise." But they do not stop here: they go on to tell us of the merciful remembrance of the Lord. Jesus came down from heaven to say that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) The Holy Ghost has told us by St. John, that this only-begotten Son of God, was given as a propitiation "for the sins of the whole world" (I John ii. 2); and again, by St.

Peter, that He "bare our sins in His own body on "the tree." (I Peter ii. 24.) Human guilt, original and actual, has thus been expiated; and our blessed Redeemer, having reversed the sentence of man's attainder, has opened for him once more, a way into the bosom of God. *This is the present condition of things between God and man.* We are called moreover, to humble ourselves and to treat with Him on these terms; to acknowledge that we are creatures ruined by transgression, and to trust unfeignedly in our Redeemer's blood, and in His mercy revealed therein. And that God who calls on us to do so, adds to His gracious command a solemn promise of acceptance; He declares that if we come to Him in this way which His love has opened, we shall not perish; He assures us of forgiveness and eternal life. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," was the word of St. Paul to the gaoler, "and THOU SHALT BE SAVED." (Acts xvi. 31.)

What I have now been explaining is the doctrine of justification by faith, the truth which is expressed in our eleventh article, and which the great Luther pronounced "the article of a standing or falling Church." There are only two ways in which the great blessing of justification can be obtained at the hand of God, by works or by faith. He who would obtain it by works, must come up to the righteousness of God's law, and fulfil all its requirements; and he may then lay claim to acceptance, in terms of the Divine promise. An angel of glory may obtain acceptance in this way; but it is a contradiction in terms to speak of

a fallen creature doing so. For the justification of the fallen implies the forgiveness of their sins, as well as the acceptance of their persons; and the man who attempts to recommend himself to God by his works, denies by the very attempt, that he has any sins to be forgiven. This way to God's favour then being closed against us by the very fact of our having sinned, there is only one other way open, reliance on free grace. And this, I repeat, is justification by faith; a justification which is obtained, not by doing anything, but by believing in something which God has done. For we must not mingle these two methods of salvation; we must not attempt to do something for ourselves, and think to trust in Christ for what remains. St. Paul's language is express; "If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." And he tells us yet more distinctly that "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but" that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans iv. 4, 5; xi. 6.) In these words, let us observe, he that worketh and he that believeth are intentionally and expressly contrasted. The former is said by the Apostle, to obtain his reward as a matter of debt. If then there be such a man, if there be any who can say, my obedience is faultless and deserves the Divine recompense, let that man stand forth. But if the whole earth does not furnish such a man, there is only one other way, says the Apostle, of obtaining Divine

acceptance ; and that is by working not, but by believing. He does not say that it is not obtained by working ; he says that it is obtained by *working not*. Nothing in language can be stronger than this expression, especially as taken with its context. It signifies that we must designedly abstain from even attempting to do anything to procure salvation for ourselves, and must trust absolutely and implicitly in the free mercy of God. It is free indeed ; the object of the faith of which St. Paul is here speaking, the God who is to be believed in, is He who justifieth *the ungodly*. Believing in Him in this gracious character, and coming to Him with unfeigned acknowledgment of our ungodliness, we obtain, as has been stated before, the forgiveness of sin and acceptance in His sight. St. Paul declares this in the scripture to which we are now referring. Having said that our faith is in this case, "counted for righteousness," he goes on to describe the blessedness bestowed on us to be that of iniquity forgiven, sin covered, and transgression imputed no more. It is in this way then that we are accepted before God ; and it is when we are thus accepted, that instead of working not, we begin to serve Him in sincerity and truth. Our works and services begin also then to find acceptance ; they are the works and services of those who are JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE.

Now this, let me remark in conclusion, was THE RELIGION OF ABEL. And he warns us from the tomb, to make it our religion. For self-righteous Cain slew him because he made Christ his hope, and because God testified from heaven that He accepted

him in doing so. And the same God who accepted him, will accept us also; he "obtained witness that "he was righteous," and our faith, as we have just seen, shall be "counted for righteousness." There is moreover something very remarkable in the way in which his acceptance is recorded. "The Lord had "respect to Abel, and to his offering." He had respect to Abel in the first place, because he came in faith; he had respect to what he brought in the second place, because it was the offering of an accepted man. And He will in like manner, as has just been stated, have respect to us when we come to Him in the Lord Jesus, and then to our services for the sake of those who present them. Following Abel's example, we shall meet with Abel's recompense.

But Abel warns us also from the tomb, that his religion was disliked. And it is disliked still. Salvation by free grace, has been "the offence of the "Cross," ever since the Cross was preached in the world. (Galatians v. 11.) This dislike too is universal. The openly immoral dislike it, because even they imagine that they have something to recommend them to God. The upright and moral dislike it, because it makes no account of their goodness. And the outwardly religious dislike it also, because it sets aside their piety. But if we have been taught by the blessed Spirit to know our undone condition, we shall cleave to it as our only hope of salvation; and the dislike of the whole world will not move us to the right hand or the left. And whatever the self-confident may think, the only religion which has any abiding

hold on the heart of man, is that which thus begins at the foot of the Cross. Cain's religion was destroyed in a moment, yea it was turned into bitter hatred, by the unwelcome revelation of a holiness which rejected him. But the Divine holiness and all the Divine perfections are satisfied in the Cross of Christ, and are therefore not against us but for us, if we have made that Cross our confidence. And so increase of knowledge must lead to increase of love, till knowledge is perfected and faith is swallowed up in vision. Transformed then, by the grace of God, into the holy image of our Saviour, we shall see Him who pitied us in our vileness and justified us in our ungodliness: washed from every stain, and clothed with the raiment of righteousness, we shall see the face of that loving Father who received us in our misery and destitution. And at the rapturous sight love shall be perfected for ever. May God grant this grace to us all !

LECTURE III.

FAITH OF ENOCH.

HEBREWS XI. 5, 6.

“ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and was not found, because God had translated him : for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

THE verses which we have just read contain St. Paul's second historical example of faith, its results and its reward. The Hebrews were too well-acquainted with their own Scriptures not to be familiar with the name of Enoch. And they did not require to be told that this distinguished worthy of old time had obtained the Divine approbation ; the testimony which God Himself had borne to His servant in his translation without seeing death, rendered him independent even of apostolic witness. St. Paul however, as in the case of Abel, states something concerning Enoch which is not to be found in Old-Testament Scripture, viz. that the life by which

he pleased God, and which was rewarded by his escaping death, was the result of faith. He then proves this statement by reminding the Hebrews that "without faith it is impossible to please Him;" a proposition nearly self-evident; for as the Apostle goes on to reason, there is no pleasing God without coming to Him, and no coming to God without believing "that He is," and that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Taking the latter verse of the text then as the Apostle's account of faith in general, and of the faith of Enoch in particular, let us consider his remarkable history in the light which it affords. And when we have been thus furnished with another proof at once of the real nature of faith, and of the results and glorious reward to which it leads, let us seek to bring home these solemn lessons to our hearts.

I. Enoch believed that there was a God, that God might be sought, and that He was the rewarder of them that sought Him. The seventh man from Adam, and his cotemporary for more than three hundred years, could not possibly be ignorant of the Divine existence. Nay more, he must have known something of the Divine character and of God's relation to mankind. He must have known that man was at the first created upright, and that transgression had been the cause of his miserable fall; he must also have known that by reason of that transgression God's wrath had descended on himself and his fellow-men. And the same common progenitor or those instructed by him, who taught Enoch to know these things, taught him, as we learn from the text,

that God might be sought. We saw in the last lecture that Abel was aware of this truth, and that he approached God and was accepted. Enoch was aware of it also, and trusting in the sacrifice of that Saviour who was to be revealed in the fulness of time, he diligently sought God's face. And his faith which thus in one respect kept pace with that of Abel, went beyond it in another. Abel's faith embraced Christ's first coming; but Enoch's embraced His second coming also when the reward of His people shall be revealed. For he prophesied of that glorious event for the warning of the wicked and the consolation of the just; "BEHOLD, THE LORD COMETH" he said, "with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," (Jude 14). The faith of Enoch thus embraced, in common with all true faith, the three fundamental principles of revealed religion, viz. the existence, the mercy, and the glorious promises of God. And it agrees, let us observe, with the definition of faith given in the text. It was "the evidence of things not seen." It is needless to remark that, save the Divine testimony, Enoch had no evidence of these things; he had never seen God, and the revelation of the Saviour was then a far-distant event. It was also "the substance of things hoped for." Let us observe the terms of his prophecy, "behold the Lord cometh;" not will come. And this is not accidental, but the natural language of faith, which by laying substantial hold of the Divine promises and assuring itself of their fulfilment, turns in effect, the future into the present. It therefore takes no note of time, but overleaps intervening ages, esteeming a thousand years as one day.

"Behold, the Judge" says St. James, "standeth before the door," (James v. 9). "Let your moderation be known unto all men," says St. Paul, "the Lord is at hand," (Philip. iv. 5). "Behold, I come quickly" says Christ Himself, "and my reward is with me," (Rev. xxii. 12). Abraham saw this glorious revelation in his day, for faith imparted to God's promises the character of present reality. And Enoch seeing it also, proclaimed aloud to a thoughtless generation, "Behold, the Lord cometh."

The case of Enoch is an illustration too of the results and reward of faith. He "was translated," St. Paul tells us, "that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him." We are then informed of the reason of this distinguished honour and singular felicity. "Before his translation," says the Apostle, "he had" or rather has "this testimony that he pleased God;" i.e. it is recorded of him in holy Scripture that previous to his translation he had obtained the approbation of heaven. Now he obtained this approbation by his faith, and by the fruits which that faith brought forth in him. Let us turn to the book of Genesis, where God records His servant's history, and we shall see the truth of this remark. In the short compass of four sentences we are twice told that "Enoch walked with God." This beautiful language is most expressive. "Can two walk together," asks the prophet, "except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3). Moreover, when we walk with any one, we pursue the same path with them; and our backs and faces also are toward the same objects. Thus then it

was that Enoch walked with God. Believing in Him as the God of mercy, and embracing His glorious promises, he was agreed with Him and diligently sought His face. And loving Him in whose mercy he thus confided, he loved what God loved, and hated what God hated; he turned his back on sin and sinners, and his face toward righteousness and the righteous. Nor was it for a time only that Enoch followed this righteous course. There are many of whom God complains, as He did of Israel of old, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew; it goeth away" (Hosea vi. 4). But it was not so with Enoch; he did not weary in the ways of God. He walked with Him, as we read in the Scripture to which we are now referring, not a month nor a year, not ten years nor twenty years, not fifty years nor even an hundred years, but "THREE HUNDRED YEARS." He also during this period, as we read in the same Scripture, "begat sons and daughters;" so that his family were growing up around him, whilst he walked before them as the man of God. There is something very affecting in this thought. The youngest member of Enoch's family might have said, I remember my father for these fifty years, and he has still walked with God. My remembrance of him is the same, another member of his family might have answered, but it reaches back to an hundred years. Mine reaches back to two hundred, a third might have replied, but my earliest recollections agree with yours, for they recal only the man of righteousness and truth. And I remember our father for these three hundred years, his

eldest son Methuselah might have said; and as far as memory can retrace the events of our family-history during so long a period, I remember only the servant of the Most High. What a glorious result of faith is here! The infidel says that it is of no consequence what a man believes. But we see the contrary in Enoch. His faith produced THREE HUNDRED YEARS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS; it made him during that period, the loving father, the tender husband, the upright master, and the zealous servant of God. It must have done indeed in his heart, its blessed work of love, and made him superior by its joy-inspiring anticipations, at once to the smiles and to the frowns of the wicked world around him. And it did not go unrewarded. He "was translated that he should not see death," says St. Paul; he passed into the invisible world without tasting the bitterness of that last dreadful cup. "He was not," we read in the book of Genesis; he "was not found," says the Apostle. He disappeared from among men. His family and kinsfolk and acquaintance sought him, but could not find him. They knew not where he was gone, but we know: "God took him," says the book of Genesis; "God had translated him," says St. Paul. Elisha was present at the rapture of his master Elijah, and the disciples beheld when their Lord ascended to glory. And perhaps also in like manner, some of the just who then lived in the world, were the chosen witnesses of this great act of mercy. It seems more probable however, from the language employed, that it was not so; that God came secretly and stole away His faithful servant

from a generation which knew not his worth. But however this was, the blessedness of Enoch was the same. He had believed in God as the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him, and his own reward was earlier and more abundant than the most impassioned hope could have anticipated (Genesis v. 22—24).

II. Let us now consider all this for our own profit. We have already seen what Enoch's faith was; he believed what God revealed, and expected what God promised. And faith in us must be the same. God has revealed to us, as He did to Enoch, the blessed truth of His existence; He has also declared that He may be sought, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him. For He has made known in the Cross of Jesus, His love to the world and the taking away of the world's sin, and has promised acceptance and eternal glory to those who come to Him in the risen Saviour. These gracious revelations are the objects of faith; and without such faith, "it is impossible," as the text warns us, that we should please God. For nothing else will bring us to God, will fill our hearts with His love, will dispose us to be His servants, or will render our services acceptable. If we are disposed to think otherwise, let us remember the history of Cain. He attempted to come to God by another way than that of revealed mercy. But he was rejected in so doing. And his rejection is God's testimony to all generations that "without faith it is impossible to please Him." And if we are without faith, we are without excuse in being so. For blessed

indeed are the eyes which see the things which we see: Enoch's opportunities and advantages were as nothing compared to ours. Instead of the dim and indistinct intimations of gospel-grace which were vouchsafed in his day, we are privileged to dwell in the meridian light of the Cross, and to behold God's love and mercy written there as with a sunbeam, so that he who runs may read. The future reward of God's believing people is also plainly set before us. Enoch knew that the Redeemer should come in glory; but we know what this glory is. God has told us that Jesus is His Melchizedec, King and Priest; He has told us also that His people shall be coheirs with Him, being made "kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Revelation i. 6). In short, God has told us every thing which we need to know, in language intelligible to the understanding of a child. And there is no difficulty, no mystery about faith; we believe man when he speaks to us, and God is surely more deserving of our confidence. What shall be said then if, with all these advantages, we are found not to have known a Saviour's love, and not to have trusted in a Saviour's promises? Believing Enoch will rise against us and condemn us in the day of the Lord.

With faith, as we have already learnt, its results and reward are necessarily and most intimately connected. We learn from the case before us, that its results are righteousness now, and that its reward is glory hereafter. Let us take these topics in order.

There is a very large class of persons to whom faith seems a very easy thing. They tell us that God's

love, mercy, and promises are enrolled among the articles of their creed, that they have always devoutly believed them, and that in addressing them as unbelievers and calling them to the exercise of faith, we injure and insult them. But what, let us ask such persons, has this faith done for you? You say that you believe in God's love. Have you learned then to love Him again, and are you daily seeking to serve Him? You say that you believe in His promises, that you are looking for the glory prepared for His people. Does this hope lead you then to live above the world, and make your conversation even on earth, that of the citizens of heaven? Do not say that these questions are irrelevant, and that we have no right to try faith by such tests. If we had made the same inquiries of Enoch, he could have answered us: and though he is not in the world now, Scripture, as we have already seen, answers on his behalf. It tells us that his faith in God taught and enabled him, for three hundred years, to do His will. This was its result though the will of God was then but little known, and the way of serving Him was very indistinctly revealed. It is widely different with us. The will of God is revealed now as plainly as the promises of salvation; and if we desire to do it, we know where to apply for strength. Let us bring our faith then to this test. For if the faith of Enoch will at last condemn the unbelieving, his three hundred years of righteousness will condemn the unholy professor.

There is another class of persons to whom the case of Enoch speaks. They are not like the class

just referred to, for they are really possessed of faith, and sincerely desire to serve and glorify God. But their views of Christian holiness are low, and their attainments are low in consequence. We expect, they say, to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, and through the free grace of God: do not speak to us therefore, of our ever being able so to walk as to obtain the Divine approbation; for we are only poor sinners, and our righteousness is as filthy rags. They think to do honour, by such language, to the righteousness of the Saviour, and to magnify the grace of God. In this however they are mistaken. Far be it from us to lose sight for a moment, of the blessed truth to which our attention was called in the last lecture, viz. that we are justified by the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of His Son. But we must be equally tenacious of the kindred truth that the justified man, though the sacrifice of Christ must continue to be his only confidence to the end, is made by the grace of God, really and truly righteous. For in justification, the Holy Ghost takes possession of the heart; and when that heart is sanctified and hallowed by His gracious indwelling, we are enabled so to order our life and conversation as to win the approbation of that Father in whose mercy we have placed our hope. It was thus with the Thessalonian believers. We remember "without ceasing," says St. Paul, "your work of faith, and labour of love, and "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the "sight of God, even our Father." (I Thessalonians i. 3. Original.) Their work, their labour and their patience were precious in the eyes of the Apostle;

but his chief joy in these fruits of righteousness arose from his remembering that another eye observed them, the paternal eye above. Many persons startle at this language, as if we meant by using it, that there was some goodness yet lingering in fallen man. St. Paul tells us, they say, that "there is none righteous, no, "not one;" and again he says, "I know that in me "dwelleth no good thing." (Romans iii. 10; vii. 18.) But such texts as these have nothing to do with the matter. They speak of man as a fallen and corrupt creature; St. Paul is careful to explain in the last cited text, that it is *in his flesh* that no good thing dwells: but we are now considering man as a creature redeemed, and dwelt in by the Spirit of his Redeemer. And if we would read God's account of him in this character, we must turn to another class of texts. "He that saith, he abideth in Him," says St. John, "ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." St. John had seen how Jesus walked; and he of all men was aware of the import of such a statement. He tells us again, that "every man that hath this hope in "him purifieth himself, even as He is pure;" that "whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not;" that "he "that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is "righteous;" and that he that "is born of God doth "not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and "he cannot sin." (I John ii. 6; iii. 3, 6, 7, 9.) That very apostle, who speaking of himself as depraved in Adam, acknowledges, as we have just seen, that no good thing dwelt in him, and complains, "Who shall "deliver me from the body of this death?" tells us in

the next sentence, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" had achieved for him the deliverance which he sought. (Romans vii. 24, 25; viii. 2.) And in conformity with this, he tells those to whom his words were addressed, "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness:" he congratulates the Corinthians, "Ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and love:" he says of those who laboured with him in the gospel, "They are THE GLORY OF CHRIST." (Romans xv. 14; II Corinthians viii. 7, 23.) It is indeed impossible for fallen man, of himself, "so to walk as to please God." But Jesus died to make it possible for him to do so; and the Holy Ghost is given for the same blessed end. "He gave Himself for us," says St. Paul, "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify" us "unto Himself." (Titus ii. 14.) "Abide in me," is His own language, "and I in you...he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." To this exhortation He has annexed the gracious promise, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And we have an inspired comment on this promise, from one who heard it made,—"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (John xv. 4, 5, 7; I John iii. 22.) Enoch, let us remember, is a living exemplification of this truth. If we learn from the case of Abel, that casting ourselves in our guilt, on God's free mercy, we shall be by Him accepted and saved, we learn from that of

Enoch, that by the renewing grace of God's holy Spirit, we may walk and live to His praise and honour. Let us not say then that we are poor sinners, and that much cannot be expected from us. Enoch also was a poor sinner; and his privileges and advantages, as has been already mentioned, were far, very far below those vouchsafed to us. He who bent on Enoch His approving eye, reminds us of these superior privileges, and says to every one of us, as the lesson of His servant's history, Go, and do thou likewise.

And the God who rewarded Enoch will not leave us unrewarded if we follow his steps. If Abel being dead, yet speaketh, Enoch being translated, also speaketh. The one tells us that righteousness is hateful to fallen man; the other declares its value in the sight of the holy God. Man declared in the one case, that the righteous was not worthy to live; God declared in the other, that he was worthy to live for ever. Death was in the one case, the expression of man's hatred; exemption from death was in the other, the expression of God's love. And in connection with this last remark, let me observe that two very peculiar circumstances distinguished the reward of Enoch. He looked, as we have seen, for the glorious appearing of the Lord; and he passed to God without seeing death. And we see thus in him a foreshewing of the final reward of God's people, —of those who at the time of the end, shall be found walking with God and looking for Jesus; they shall pass into His presence without seeing death. For such a people shall be found on the earth in the day of Christ's glorious appearing; and Scripture tells us that this

shall be their reward. "Behold, I shew you a mystery," says St. Paul; "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," (I Corinthians xv. 51, 52). And he says even more distinctly in another place, that "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (i.e. go before) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself," he adds, "shall descend from heaven with a shout...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (I Thessalonians iv. 15—17.) It is to this that Christ Himself refers in His remarkable words in St. Luke's gospel. "I tell you, there shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left; two women shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, and the other left." Let us observe this language—"the one shall be taken," as Enoch was taken, ("he was not, for God took him"); "the other," being found unworthy, "shall be left." The case of Enoch speaks therefore most emphatically to the Christian Church, and to us its baptized members. It bids us look for our Lord and follow Enoch's example, telling us that peradventure we may attain to his singular honour and felicity. Let us not answer that this is impossible, because the coming of Christ is as yet very far away. We cannot tell that it is far away. Christ has warned us that it shall come "as a

"snare, on all them that dwell on the earth," and has charged us to "watch and pray always" that we may be counted worthy to stand before Him. (Luke xxi. 35, 36.) He has said again, "Take ye heed, ye know not when the time is;" and again, "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh...lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping." And to prevent any from putting these solemn words away, as if they were applicable to the disciples alone, "What I say unto you," He adds, "I say unto all, Watch." (Mark xiii. 33—37.) These warnings and charges, applying therefore as they do to us, teach us that for ought we know, we may be the last generation of God's people on the earth, the generation in whose day the Son of Man shall be revealed from heaven. And the very possibility of such an event being so near, ought to stir us up to follow the example of Enoch's faithfulness, having Enoch's glorious recompense before our eyes continually.

I do not say that we are the last generation of the world, and neither do I say that we are not; God knoweth. If we are not, if it is God's will that we all should die, let us die in faith; and God will keep our dust and raise it up again at the last day. His raised and His translated saints, His Abels and His Enochs shall then have one reward and one glory; for those scriptures which have been already cited, tell us that "the dead shall be raised incorruptible," nay, that they "shall rise first." Let us remember however the feelings which were cherished on this subject by the believers of apostolic times. Surrounded by a wicked

world, with which they had no sympathy nor communion, they earnestly desired, not to die, but that Christ would come and receive them to Himself. "Our conversation is in heaven," says St. Paul; "from whence also we look for the Saviour...*who shall change* our vile body;" and "therefore, my brethren," he proceeds, "so stand fast in the Lord...the Lord is at hand." (Philippians iii. 20, 21; iv. 1. 5.) "We know," he tells the Corinthians, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands." But dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, was not the object of his desire; for he proceeds—"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (II Corinthians v. 1—4.) Death shall be "swallowed up in victory," (I Corinthians xv. 54), in the resurrection of the righteous dead; and mortality, of life, in the translation of the living: and the latter of these glorious promises was the first object of desire among the Christians of apostolic times. They were even in danger, in this matter, of becoming impatient with God. "The Lord direct your hearts," says St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "into the patient waiting for Christ." (II Thessalonians iii. 5.) But God enabled His people to exercise this patience; and so, when they saw that their Lord came not to them, they were content, nay they rejoiced to go to Him, that they might abide in His bosom till the resurrection of the just. "I am in a strait betwixt two," St. Paul exclaims when

contemplating his possible martyrdom, "having a desire "to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." (Philippians i. 23.) But these are not the feelings of God's people in the present day; we look now, (I speak generally,) for nothing else than death. Whereas, while we are content to die, we ought to be found looking and longing for the revelation of our Lord and Saviour, the abolisher of death and the bringer in of the everlasting kingdom. Such a hope would purify our hearts and deliver us from the power of a present evil world. The prospect of death is never spoken of as purifying; but we are told by St. John, that "when "He shall appear, we shall be like Him," and that "every man that hath THIS HOPE...purifieth himself, "even as He is pure." (I John iii. 2, 3.) St. Peter also, having spoken of the coming of the day of God, and the revelation of the new heavens and earth, says, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such "things, be diligent that ye may be found...without spot, "and blameless." (II Peter iii. 14.) And St. Paul, when enlarging on Christian duty, reminds us that it is the grace of God which teaches us to live thus "soberly, righteously, and godly...looking for that "blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory." (Titus ii. 11—13. Original.) So that, according to the testimony of these three apostles, it is the hope of being glorified with Christ which will teach us to follow the example of Enoch's righteousness and diligence, and stir us up to seek resemblance to HIM in whose presence we are longing to appear. And by producing these holy results, this hope will accomplish its object. For it is not to a worldly-minded and

carnal people, but to a people thus walking and pleasing God, that Jesus shall at last be revealed. The holiness of His people therefore hastens His appearing; "What manner of persons" asks St. Peter, "ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God." (II Peter iii. 11, 12. Margin.) Nor is it difficult to understand how this should be. Only two men since the fall of our first father, have been counted worthy to pass to God without seeing death, viz. Enoch and Elijah. The former was eminent for righteousness, in the midst of an abandoned generation; the latter, for godly zeal in the midst of a covenant-people apostate from the Lord. And God gave this testimony of His approbation of both, taking them to Himself from those who despised and hated them. Now Scripture has expressly warned us that the world and the professing Church shall, in the time of the end, be in the same evil and in the same apostate condition. But God's people shall still witness for His name; for as "the wickedness of the wicked" increases, they shall walk in the midst of it as Enoch and Elijah did. And the objects on the one hand, of the world's contempt and hatred, and wearied out on the other, with its abounding profligacy, they shall send up to heaven the living cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." Nor shall that cry be unheeded. The Lord shall rend the heavens and come down in answer to it, manifesting His approbation of righteousness, by receiving His faithful ones, as He received Enoch, to Himself, and destroying with the right arm of His vengeance, "them which destroy the earth." (Revelation xi. 18.)

Let us follow Enoch's example then, and be found

looking for our Lord; let us tread in Enoch's steps, being found, like them that wait for such a hope, with our loins girded and our lamps burning. And let us not say that it is the same thing to us whether we go to Christ by death, or He comes to us in glory. This is the language of cruel selfishness. "Blessed" indeed "are the dead which die in the Lord" (Revelation xiv. 13); for they leave all their sorrows, cares, and temptations behind them. But though they enter into peace, Satan's power is not broken, and the world from which they have departed, is still groaning under the oppression of wretchedness, sin, and death. It shall be far otherwise when Jesus comes to His people. The day of their glory shall be the day of universal joy: it shall be the creature's deliverance "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans viii. 21.) There is this blessed difference between the translation of Enoch and those of whom Enoch was the prototype. He left a world of sin and misery behind him, a world led astray of Satan. But when Jesus shall change His people into the likeness of His glory, the whole earth shall break forth into singing, for He shall "make all things new." "There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, neither shall there be any more pain. The tabernacle of God" shall also be "with men, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Revelation xxi. 3—5.) As for Satan and his angels, they shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and their hateful works shall be made an end of for ever. The Lord in His own time, hasten that glorious day!

LECTURE IV.

FAITH OF NOAH.

HEBREWS XI. 7.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

WE cannot read these words, however superficially, without discerning at once the object of the inspired writer; they contain a third, and a most singularly apposite illustration of the subject in hand. Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet, and acted upon the warning, preparing an ark. And he obtained by doing so, the testimony of God's approval, in the salvation of himself and his house. We are thus furnished with another proof of the justice of the definition of faith, and the correctness of the statement regarding it, with which this important chapter opens.

But the words which we have now read, contain besides this, most precious and invaluable instruction;

for they teach us in a more striking manner than either of the preceding cases, that faith is an act, not of the understanding merely, but of the heart. We have the root of faith; Noah was "moved with fear," i. e. when God spake, he heard with reverence, and believed. We have the result of faith; obedience; he "prepared an ark." We have the effect of faith on others; "by which he condemned the world." And lastly, we have the testimony of God to him who thus believed His word; he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." All this is most important. It has long been a leading objection of the infidel to Christianity, that it makes so much of faith. You tell us, he says, that faith is believing a testimony. Now a man is quite passive in believing. If suitable evidence be afforded to him, he cannot help believing; if it be lacking, he cannot make himself believe. We are not therefore responsible for our belief (as was once declared in public and high places), any more than for the colour of our skin. And to annex the Divine approbation to faith, and to reward it with salvation on the one hand, while the unbeliever is visited on the other, with condemnation and wrath, are unrighteous acts, and utterly unworthy of God. But this vain reasoning is at once set aside, if the seat of faith be in the heart. And it has its seat there, if its root be reverence of God, and its unfailing result, obedience to His will. God is moreover glorified if this be so, in annexing salvation to faith, and visiting unbelief with condemnation. The unbeliever says, I lack evidence, and no blame attaches to me; God says,

there is sufficient evidence, and "he that believeth not "is condemned already."

Let us now consider this precious subject in detail; reviewing in the first place, the history of Noah, and the lessons which it teaches; and inquiring in the second place, into the application of these lessons, both to the Hebrews and to ourselves.

I. In reviewing the history of Noah, we shall follow the natural divisions of the text. I shall endeavour to shew, by comparing it with the book of Genesis, that Noah's faith was indeed "the evidence "of things not seen." And while his faith was thus an act of the understanding, the same comparison will discover that the heart entered largely into it, by revealing his spirit of godly fear and implicit obedience, by explaining to us also how he condemned the world, and by shewing the Divine estimate of the character of His servant. Due consideration of these things will then enable us to understand the reward of Noah. For the Divine approbation always expresses itself in act, in time or in eternity. It expressed itself to Abel in the acceptance of his sacrifice; to Enoch, in his translation to glory; and to Noah, in his salvation from the flood.

We are told in the book of Genesis, that "when "men began to multiply on the face of the earth," the sons of Seth, led captive by their eyes, took to themselves wives of the ungodly daughters of Cain. The offspring of these unhallowed unions became a race infamous for crime, and universal corruption soon

overspread the world. God saw this fearful apostacy ; it repented Him that He had created the human family, and He resolved to destroy them. He was pleased to communicate to one man these feelings and awful purposes ; that man was NOAH. To him God said, "the end of all flesh is come before me...behold "I will destroy them with the earth." It might be more than faith could grasp, that the merciful and gracious One could really entertain such a purpose. It was therefore announced again, with yet greater distinctness and precision. "Behold, I, EVEN I," said the Lord, "do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, "to destroy all flesh from under heaven ; and every "thing that is in the earth shall die." And as the execution of this awful sentence approached nearer, it was announced a third time. "Yet seven days," said the Lord, "and I will cause it to rain upon the earth "forty days and forty nights ; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy" (Genesis vi. 1—17 ; vii. 4). It is to these warnings of God to Noah, that St. Paul refers in the text. They were warnings of "things not seen as yet," for there was no outward indication of the approach of this terrible catastrophe. The sky remained serene, the earth and ocean preserved their usual relative positions, and all things seemed to bid fair for continuance in the stable condition in which they had been originally fixed. We are assured that this was the case from the circumstance mentioned by our Lord, viz. that the men of Noah's generation were to the last, deaf to his warnings ; nay, were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in

marriage, till the very day of his entrance into the ark (Matthew xxiv. 38, 39). In this then, we see Noah's faith. There was no appearance of danger; but God said that destruction was at hand, and Noah took God's word as his "evidence of things not seen."

The same word which was Noah's evidence of the coming catastrophe was reported by him, as we shall see immediately, to the men of his generation. They had thus the same evidence with himself. But none of them regarded it. They pointed to the serene sky, to the quiet ocean, to the stable earth, and laughed believing Noah to scorn. For they were guided by sense, whilst Noah followed faith. To what then is this difference to be attributed? The text answers us, Noah was "moved with fear." Let us remark this expression. It does not signify terror but godly reverence; that spirit which prompts us to say, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." It was because the men of Noah's generation had no such spirit in them, that they despised the Divine warning; it was because Noah was possessed of it, that he gave instant heed to that warning. It was because God knew him to be possessed of it, that he was made a sharer in the Divine counsels, on this awfully momentous occasion. For just before we are told of these counsels being communicated to him, we read that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," that he "was a just man and perfect in his generations," and that he "walked with God" (Genesis vi. 8, 9).

We have still further evidence however, that Noah's faith was an act of the heart. God com-

manded him to take steps for the preservation of himself and his house. "Make thee an ark," he said; "rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch;...with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it." God added moreover, "Thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Of fowls" also "after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive." And for himself and the vast animal family which was thus to be saved along with him, Noah was commanded finally to lay up store of all sorts of food; "Thou shalt gather it to thee," said the Lord, "and it shall be for food for thee, and for them." Without cavil, without murmur, without objection "thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." (Genesis vi. 14—22.) Some of us may be disposed to reply that it was a very easy trial of obedience. But such a remark is the offspring of mere thoughtlessness. We are told by St. Peter, that "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing:" the same apostle tells us that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." (I Peter iii. 20; II Peter ii. 5.) We are told in the book of Genesis, that this long-suffering waited for "an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis vi. 3); and during that period therefore, Noah was at once preaching God's word and labouring with his hands at the work assigned to him. Month succeeded month, and year succeeded

year, but the sound of the axe was still heard in the forests, and of the hammer on the timbers of the ark; for Noah had none to assist him but his sons and grandsons, and the rearing of so vast an edifice, especially if we consider his avocations as a minister, must have been a work both of labour and of time. And as human nature is the same from generation to generation, the inhabitants of the old world would no doubt flock in crowds to view the progress of this singular undertaking. As the vast edifice began to take form, they would gaze with astonishment on story rising above story, and would inspect with wonder its internal structure, with chambers fitted for the reception of men and animals. But as they gazed and wondered, the man of God persevered and the work was still proceeding. They saw him at last finish it, and pitch it within and without to protect it from the hostile element; and what must have impressed all this yet more with the character of reality, they saw him patiently and carefully store up in it all kinds of food. They learned moreover, from his unwearied preaching, the purpose of this labour of ages; they saw him gather the male and female of every living creature into the shelter thus carefully prepared. And we know the character of the old world too well, not to be assured that as they saw and heard these things, curiosity and wonder would soon give way to other feelings. Contempt of the old man's credulity, expressing itself in taunts and sneers, would be the first; and as his perseverance led them to fear that peradventure he had reason for what he did, this

feeling would in its turn, be succeeded by bitter hatred. Nor would this hatred be slow to express itself in a generation so lawless, so abandoned, and so violent. Scripture has drawn a veil over Noah's sufferings, and they remain veiled till the resurrection of the just. But judging from what man has done in every age against God's faithful witnesses, we have every reason to believe that whether testifying with his mouth or labouring with his hands, Noah had to do so in the face of violence and bloody threatenings; threatenings which, but for the Divine protection, would have been accomplished in the destruction both of the preacher and of the work with which God had intrusted him. And from his being able therefore, during so long a period, to set his face "like a flint" and persevere, we learn that Noah's faith was no cold conviction of the understanding, but was indeed an act of the heart. He revered, he loved, he believed God; he entered into the righteousness of His awful purposes; and though surrounded on every side with contempt, scorn, and violence, he could say with St. Paul after him, "none of these things move me."

All this prepares us to understand how Noah "condemned the world." The text says that he condemned it by his faith and preparation of the ark. If God had favoured him with some evidence of the coming catastrophe which was withheld from his neighbours; if his faith had been in this way a mere assent to evidence, whilst their unbelief resulted from lack of that evidence, he could not have condemned the world. But it was quite otherwise. God revealed His purpose

to Noah, and Noah believing God, proclaimed it on every side: God directed him to prepare a shelter, and Noah taking advantage of the gracious command, prepared the ark in the sight of all men. The intellects of his cotemporaries were not inferior to his own; they had the same capacity with him of receiving evidence, and of acting on warnings clearly and distinctly given. But hardness of heart made them slight that evidence, and prevented them from acting on these warnings. And Noah therefore, by his faith and obedience, manifested their ungodliness, and shewed them to be deserving of Divine condemnation and wrath.

And by the same faith and obedience which thus condemned the world, Noah, as we are further taught in the text, "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." This expression is singular, but as it stands in contrast with the words which we have just been considering, its meaning is very plain. The excellent sacrifice of Abel condemned unbelieving Cain on the one hand, and obtained on the other hand for the offerer, God's "witness that he was righteous." And the preparation of the ark in like manner, while it manifested the ungodliness of an unbelieving generation, declared Noah to be a man of faith in God, and to be possessed of that righteousness which is the fruit of faith. That great act of sustained obedience justified God's estimate of the character of His servant, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." (Genesis vii. 1.) It justified him moreover, as we shall now see, in the reward which he bestowed on him.

The text reminds us that this reward was preservation from death. And if we turn to the book of Genesis we shall find that after Noah and his family had, by Divine direction, entered the ark and the Lord had shut them in, "the fountains of the great deep "were broken up" at the command of Omnipotence, "and the windows of heaven were opened." "The "flood" we are further told, "was forty days upon the "earth ;...and all the high hills, that were under the "whole heaven, were covered :...and all flesh died that "moved upon the earth...all in whose nostrils was the "breath of life...and Noah only remained alive, and "they that were with him in the ark." (Genesis vii. 7—24.) And God was glorified both in this terrible destruction and gracious preservation. Those who were destroyed had slighted His warnings, and hardened their hearts that they should not believe His word ; their unbelief had manifested their ungodliness. Noah on the other hand, had hearkened to His voice and put his humble trust in His promised deliverance : and according to his faith so it was to him ; that deliverance came. It was indeed a most signal testimony of God's approbation of faith and of that righteousness which is the result of faith ; for the same Divine sentence which pronounced Noah righteous, contained the gracious invitation, "Come thou and all thy house into "the ark." He was not saved alone ; his house, as the text reminds us, was comprehended with him ; God preserving even ungodly Ham from destruction that He might testify His approval of his believing and obedient father. And God has given yet further testi-

mony of His approval of His righteous servant. He has caused his history to be recorded in holy Scripture; and his name and memorial are engraved by this record, in the archives of the kingdom of God. That honoured name, and the deeds which have made it honourable, have thus come down to us; the proof on the one hand, of the truth of the apostolic statement that God's good report was, in old time, obtained by faith; and the testimony against the infidel on the other, that the faith which thus results in salvation, proceeds from a righteous heart.

II. St. Paul, in thus referring to the case of Noah, seems to have had the peculiar circumstances of the Hebrews in his eye. For they as well as Noah, had been warned of God, of coming desolations and impending wrath. Jesus had said concerning their holy city "the days shall come...that thine enemies shall "cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, "and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee "even with the ground, and thy children within thee." (Luke xix. 43, 44.) He had said concerning their temple, that one stone in its sacred walls should not be left standing on another: He had spoken of tribulation coming on the Jewish people, such as had not been since the beginning of the world, nor should be till the end of it. (Matthew xxiv. 1, 2, 21.) These things were "not seen as yet;" though as we learn from another part of this epistle, those who were standing in God's counsel, could discern intimations of their approach. (Hebrews x. 25.) But the unbelieving

Hebrews blinded by pride and self-righteousness, were utterly deaf to all warning, and persecuted their believing brethren for having made Jesus, the ark prepared of God, their refuge against the day of calamity. St. Paul therefore in the text, would comfort those who were exposed to this persecuting violence, by reminding them of the circumstances, the faith, and the reward of Noah. Whilst our poor blinded brethren, he would say, scoff at the Divine warnings, and blaspheme Jesus the only ark of safety, let us, with Noah, "moved with fear," take refuge in the bosom of His love before the tempest of His wrath arise. And if they persecute us for doing so, let us possess our souls in patience; their violence shall soon be ended. For yet a little while, and that faith and patience having had its perfect work, shall glorify God in His judgments on their ungodliness: broken, dispersed, and trodden down of the Gentile, they shall afflict His heritage no more. But as for us whom they trouble, we shall be saved in the day of calamity; from under the covert of the Saviour's sheltering arms we shall behold with our eyes "and see the reward of the wicked." (Psalm xci. 8.)

Besides this reference to the condition and prospects of the believing Hebrews, the text has a catholic application. Holy Scripture warns us that this present dispensation of grace shall issue in fearful judgment; it warns us that there shall be a second flood, not of water but of fire. "The world that then was," says St. Peter, speaking of the earth in the days of Noah, "being overflowed with water, perished." And he then proceeds to tell us that "the heavens and the earth,

“which are now, by the same word are kept in store, “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment.” “The day of the Lord will come,” he again declares, “wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, “and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” (II Peter iii. 6—12.) We saw in the last lecture, that at the coming of that day the righteous shall be found in two conditions, some alive on the earth and others sleeping in the tomb. In both these conditions shall the wicked also be found. But how vast shall be the difference between the portions awarded to each! The living righteous, as we saw in the last lecture, shall be changed into the likeness of Christ’s glory, and His dead saints shall be raised from their graves, incorruptible. The terrible fire which precedes Him, shall on the other hand, burn up His living enemies (Psalm xcvi. 3); and the wicked dead of all generations, shall be raised by His Divine power, to receive their final doom. Both these things are declared by Christ Himself. “As it was in the days of Noah,” are His words, “so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, “they were given in marriage, until the day that “Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and “destroyed them all...Even thus shall it be when the “Son of man is revealed.” (Luke xvii. 26—30.) He has told us also that “the hour is coming, in the which all “that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall “come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the “resurrection of damnation.” (John v. 28, 29.) There

shall therefore be no possibility of absence from this great assize, no possibility for sinners of any generation to escape sin's just reward. Are they alive on the earth when the Judge appears? No created arm shall shelter them. Are they sleeping in the dust? The obedient tomb shall yield up its charge at the irresistible command of the Omnipotent. Now in reference to all this, we are exactly in the position of Noah, we are "warned of God of things not seen as yet." And the faith therefore which was in Noah, will lead us to take the Divine word as our evidence of them, and stand in awe.

How is it then, in this respect, between God and the world? are the majority of those who have heard these warnings, giving heed to them or not? Alas, they are not. A few are found to give heed, but the mass give proof every day, by their ungodliness and thorough wordliness, that they have no faith in them whatever. And we have already referred to our Lord's assurance that this shall be the character of the world till the very last, that men shall be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building, till the rending of the clouds asunder shall reveal the glory of the Judge.

"Along the busy mart and crowded street,
The buyer and the seller still shall meet,
And marriage-feasts begin their jocund strain;
Still, to the pouring out the cup of woe,
When earth, a drunkard, reeling to and fro,
And mountains molten by his burning feet,
And heaven his presence own, all red with furnace-heat."

To what then is this difference between man and man to be ascribed? why is it that of those who meet together in the daily intercourse of life, and profess to worship God within the same hallowed walls, some are found believing Him, whilst others are regardless of His word? We have already had our answer from the case of Noah. It is not that God has vouchsafed to some an evidence of His coming wrath which He has withheld from others: it is that some are "moved with fear" whilst others are ungodly. The pride of man rebels against this statement: sufficient evidence, human reason says, will always command faith. But reverence of God in the heart is necessary before His word appears to us TO BE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF ANY THING; and from lack of this reverence man's unbelief springs. Scripture testifies most expressly to the truth of this; and "let God be true, but every man a liar." (Romans iii. 4.) Let us turn to the Old Testament. Why was it that king Josiah gave heed to the words of God's law, and trembled at those threatenings which the kings that were before him had despised? We have our answer from God's own mouth,—*"Because thine heart was tender."* (II Kings xxii. 19.) Again, why did Belshazzar king of Babylon praise the gods of gold and silver, while his father Nebuchadnezzar, whose experience was perfectly known to him, had seen cause to acknowledge and fear the God of Israel? The words of the inspired prophet, *"Thou hast not humbled thine heart"* (Daniel v. 22), at once declare the reason. To come next to the New Testament; Christ tells us, in the parable of the sower,

of four classes of persons who hear the word of God; but one class alone retain it. And He declares the cause of this difference, that class alone have "an honest and good heart." (Luke viii. 11—15.) Let us see moreover, to what bitter root St. Peter attributes the unbelief of men in those very warnings of which we are now speaking. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" He charges these men with wilful ignorance of the judgment of God by the flood, and warns those to whom he was writing, to take heed lest they should be "led away with the error of the wicked," and fall from their "own steadfastness." (II Peter iii. 3—5, 17.) These Scriptures confirm the lesson which we are taught by the case of Noah, teaching us plainly that the seat of faith is in the heart. A bad heart, and it alone, leads us to disbelieve God; a heart like that of Noah, will make us listen to His warning voice.

Noah, as we have already seen, proved that his faith was genuine by preparing an ark to the saving of his house. And if we believe in the truth of the warnings which God has given to us, we shall give the same proof of our sincerity; we shall flee for refuge into the ark which he has prepared. We are in the circumstances of Noah when that place of safety was finished. God said to him then, "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark;" and the same God says to every one of us now, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) No other refuge shall avail in the fearful day which is

hastening on. "If His wrath be kindled, yea, but a "little, blessed are all they that put their trust in "Him." (Psalm ii. 12; P. B. V.) The bosom of His love is the only shelter from the arm of His power: within that bosom there is life and salvation; out of it there is death and ruin. Let us flee then to that bosom now, that we may find salvation. "Wash "away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16), was the word of Ananias to Saul the bloody persecutor: "whosoever shall call on the name "of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts ii. 21), was the assurance of St. Peter to those who had crucified the Saviour. Is salvation then so easily obtained? Nothing is so easy, if the heart be right. Noah was compelled to labour for ages, before his ark was ready. God has prepared our ark; we have only to enter in.

And if then we do not enter in, if notwithstanding the warnings which God has given, that awful day of which mention has been made, shall take us at last unprepared, the text warns us what the result shall be. Our kinsmen, friends, and neighbours, who have put their trust in Christ, shall be a witness against us, to condemn us. Noah also, and the believing company of whom such honourable mention is here made, shall be a witness against us, to condemn us. Yea, every man who has believed God, from righteous Abel to the last saint who shall be gathered in, shall be a witness against us, to condemn us. Many too, who never were privileged to hear of Christ's sacred name, but who made good use of opportunities far inferior to

ours, shall be a witness against us, to condemn us. The men of Nineveh shall testify before our face, that they believed God, and humbled themselves and "repented at the preaching of Jonas:" the queen of the south shall testify that "she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (Matthew xii. 41, 42). And what then shall be said for us, if we are found not to have humbled ourselves before the Son of God, speaking from the bosom of the Father; if we are found to have despised the message of mercy and kindness which He brought to a ruined world from the depths of that bosom's love? Nothing shall be said for us: as the world was condemned by Noah, so shall we be condemned. God in that day, took witness in one of themselves, against men's unbelief and ungodliness, and then He drowned them. And so shall it be in the awful day that is coming. God shall take witness against those who have not believed Him, in men of like passions with themselves; and then He shall destroy them. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews xii. 29).

But if on the other hand, we now take refuge in Him who is God's ark of safety, our final condition shall present a blessed contrast; we shall be owned as His righteous ones by the Lord when He comes in His glory. It was not written for Noah's sake alone, that he "became heir of righteousness;" for this righteousness is "by faith." God bore testimony to the righteousness of Noah, by saving him from destruction in the ark; and He shall bear testimony

in like manner, to His believing people as His righteous ones, by saving them "in the Lord with an everlasting "salvation" (Isaiah xlv. 17). Is Divine acceptance dear to us then? is eternal salvation precious? They are to be found in Christ. And let us not forget that in the case of Noah a further distinction than even personal deliverance was conferred on righteousness; his house was saved along with him. St. Paul moreover, as if this were in his mind, preached the gospel to the gaoler in these very terms, "Thou shalt be "saved, and thy house." Let all who are heads of houses, who are husbands, fathers, masters, consider these blessed words. Let us invite our families into the ark along with us; peradventure it may not be in vain. Let not prayer on our part be wanting, nor pious endeavours; and let these prayers and endeavours be inspired by faith, faith in the boundless and unsearchable goodness of God. Such prayers and pains shall have their recompense; we shall not enter heaven alone, our dear ones shall attend us. Glorious recompense! Blessed reward! When those precious to us on earth, shall say of us before the throne of the Eternal, "this was the unwearied and ardent suppliant "for my happiness, this the beloved hand which Thy "grace taught to sue, and to receive for me the gift of "salvation!"

LECTURE V.

FAITH OF ABRAHAM.

HEBREWS XI. 8—10.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

THESE verses contain another illustration of the nature and results of faith. The former illustrations have been taken from the world before the flood; but St. Paul now comes nearer to the Hebrews, referring to their own father Abraham, and after him, to the worthies of their own nation. And though the verses before us do not refer to it, the reward of faith is not forgotten. For the Apostle, as we shall see in the next lecture, having referred to the faith of Abraham's wife, mentions the glorious and abundant recompense which, in the Divine goodness, was bestowed on both of them.

Let me sketch in few words, the contents of the verses which we have read. They present to us the patriarch leaving his country and kindred, and sojourning in the land of promise. He thus left his country, they tell us, because he relied on the Divine assurance to guide him into a land which he should after receive for an inheritance: he thus sojourned in Canaan, because he believed God that Canaan was that land, and that it should be surely given to his seed. But it was a far better hope than that of the earthly Canaan, which strengthened Abraham for such a life. The last verse of the text tells us distinctly what he looked for, even "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Such was his faith and such also were its results. Detailed consideration of both will prove the truth of the statements with which this important chapter opens, and will furnish us at the same time with instructive lessons for ourselves.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, YEA he went out, not knowing whither he went.

I have given in this rendering, the intensity of the original. Abraham dwelt originally in Ur of the Chaldees. In that land his forefathers had dwelt; it was the land also of his kindred and of his father's house. He was an idolater among an idolatrous people. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the

"flood in old time," said the Lord to Israel, "even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor : and they served other gods" (Joshua xxiv. 2). This circumstance explains the Divine procedure toward Abraham. The whole earth was, at that period, fast sinking into idolatry, and God determined to make one nation the depositary and preserver of the true religion. He selected a particular family as the nursery of that nation ; He chose Abraham to be the head of that family. It was necessary that the father of the peculiar people, and the family which should proceed from him, should be separated from all contaminating influences ; and God therefore said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis xii. 1). He did not tell him where that land was, He told him simply that He would shew it ; and commanded him, in the mean time, to leave all that was dear to him on earth. And the patriarch having confidence in the Divine faithfulness, "obeyed" the Divine word ; "yea he went out," he set his face to the wide world, "not knowing whither he went." In this we discern faith in its true character, as "the evidence of things not seen." Abraham saw his native land ; its hills, its valleys, its streams had long been familiar to his eye. But he had never seen the land to which he was going, nor had he any evidence of its existence, except the word of the Lord. He was leaving a substantial certainty for what human reason would have called an uncertainty. But with Abraham it was no uncertainty, for

he believed God. And God was faithful to His word. After his servant had left Chaldea in obedience to Him, and had sojourned some time in Haran, He shewed to him and to his believing company that Canaan was the land reserved for them. "They went forth" therefore, "to go into the land of Canaan; and into "the land of Canaan they came" (Genesis xii. 5). And thus Abraham's first act of faith was rewarded; he found himself in the land of promise. But faith had still much to do.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise.

When the patriarch caught the first glimpse of the distant hills of Canaan, and much more, when he actually set foot in it, he perhaps imagined that all his trials were ended. He might suppose that nothing now remained for him but to take possession of Canaan in the name of the Lord; the faithful Promiser, he could not doubt, would in His own way enable him to do so. If these were his thoughts, his disappointment would be great indeed. He had come out of one trial of faith, and come out of it victorious; but it was only to be called to a greater. In the same sentence which mentions his arrival in Canaan, the inspired historian adds, "the Canaanite was then in the land" (Genesis xii. 6). Abraham found strangers in it before him, who shewed no disposition to quit possession or to acknowledge him as the rightful lord of the soil. Nor

was this all. He who had made the promise, now appeared to him and said, "Unto thy seed will I give 'this land'" (Genesis xii. 7). These words and others of the same character which followed them, cut off completely all hope of possession during his life-time; and we are told expressly in another Scripture, that God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so 'much as to set his foot on'" (Acts vii. 5). But Abraham was content with the appointments and the words of the Lord. He dwelt cheerfully in Canaan as a stranger and a sojourner, pitching his tent to-day, removing it to-morrow, and having no home upon the earth. Nor did the prospect of dying in a strange land, and having his bones buried in a stranger's grave, make him regret for one moment that he had left Chaldea. And this pilgrim-life was not peculiar to Abraham; it was the lot of his son and grandson after him. They were "the heirs with him of the 'same promise,'" and they were made like to him in this also, that in their day that promise was to have no fulfilment. And it had none: these three patriarchs all died among strangers; and the cave in which their venerable dust was deposited, was obtained of the stranger for money.

The text tells us that they acted this part because they had faith in God. They believed His promise that Canaan should be given to their seed, and therefore they sojourned in it. A man without faith, placed in the circumstances of Abraham, would have said, Let God either give me the land or suffer me to go back to Chaldea. But Abraham did not so, he

sojourned in it, "as in a strange country;" it is as yet a strange country, he said, but God's good time will come. It was also his delight, according to God's command, to walk through it in its length and breadth (Genesis xiii. 17), to survey it, to take note of its beauty, to lift up his eyes on its green hills and fertile fields, as a man surveys with interest the property which is to belong to his heirs for ever. And what makes this example of faith much more striking, is the fact that during most of this time, though his hopes were centred in issue, Abraham had no child. But the same God who had promised an inheritance for the seed, had promised a seed for the inheritance. And the patriarch believing in the accomplishment of either word, "sojourned in the land of promise."

We discern in all this, the genuine character of faith. Let us suppose for a moment that we had been privileged with the friendship of this sainted patriarch, and that we had attended him in some of these excursions through the land of Canaan. We mark the interest of his delighted eye, as it rests on pastures clothed with flocks and valleys covered over with corn; we hear him exclaim in rapture, with uplifted hands,—Behold the inheritance of my children! We inquire how he knows that it is their inheritance; and he answers that God has said it. We inquire again whether he sees any probability of the present inhabitants deferring to their rightful claim; and this simple believer answers, No, nor do I seek to see it. Were I to claim at this moment a single foot's breadth of it, the Canaanite would dispute my claim; but God, he

would have repeated, has said that it is my children's inheritance, and I take His word as my evidence of things not seen.

We are next told on what the faith of Abraham terminated. He was content thus to leave his native land, and to abide as a sojourner in a land of strangers,

For he looked for THE city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The change here of a single word gives much more force and intensity to the meaning. St. Paul is not speaking indefinitely but definitely. His reference, as we shall see more fully when we proceed with this chapter, is to the eternal habitation which God has prepared for His people; and an eminent translator has therefore rendered the words before us, "that firmly-founded city, whose builder and maker is God." (Boothroyd.) How very striking is the contrast which is thus presented to us! A tabernacle (or tent) pitched by the hands of man to-day, and removed by his hands to-morrow, was the earthly habitation of Abraham and his sons: a firmly-founded city, builded by the hands of God, and made to endure for ever, was the heavenly home to which these patriarchs looked. And it was this heavenly expectation which made them contented with their earthly lot. A delightful subject of meditation and inquiry now opens upon us, What was this heavenly expectation? Its importance demands our deepest and most earnest attention.

“They are not to be heard” is the orthodox declaration of our Church, “which feign that the old “fathers did look only for transitory promises.” God’s promise to Abraham before he left Chaldea, was “I “will bless thee...and thou shalt be a blessing:...in “thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis xii. 2, 3.) And we are not left in uncertainty as to the patriarch’s understanding of these words. “Your father Abraham” said our Lord to the Jews, “rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, “and was glad.” (John viii. 56.) Now the day of Christ is His manifestation as the Saviour. For this manifestation Abraham looked; and if, as was doubtless the case, he knew that Christ should spring from his family, he must also have known that it was as the father of Messiah, that he was to prove a blessing to all nations of the earth. But let us be more particular. The phrase Christ’s day, when used in holy Scripture, may and often does signify His manifestation the first time in humbled flesh; but it refers much more frequently to His manifestation the second time, in Divine majesty and glory. Abel, as we have seen, looked for the former of these manifestations, and Enoch for the second; Abraham, I believe, looked for both, as the fulfilment of God’s promise that in his seed all nations should be blessed. He had a visible type, as we shall see, of the death and resurrection of Christ, when he offered Isaac on the altar; and the words before us declare that he looked for His coming in glory. If we compare these words with the book of Revelation, this will be at once made plain to us.

For that book speaks of God's firmly-founded city, and declares that it shall be revealed in the day of Christ. "I was in the Spirit" says St. John, "on (or *in*) the "Lord's day." (i. 10.) The common interpretation of these words, viz. I was in a spiritual frame of mind on the first day of the week, is meagre and unsatisfactory. The Lord's day has no such meaning in any part of the New Testament; it signifies one thing only, the day of Christ's revelation. Nothing therefore can be more obvious than the meaning of the inspired Seer. I was rapt in the Spirit, he would say, caught away from the scenes and concerns of earth, and I found myself in the Lord's day, and amid its scenes of glory. He was permitted then to see many things of which we cannot now speak; but among them there was one which is much to our present purpose. "I "John" he tells us, "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." And he is yet more particular, for he goes on to tell us, "There came unto me one of the seven angels...and "carried me away in the Spirit...and shewed me that "great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of "heaven from God, having the glory of God;...and had "a wall great and high, and had twelve gates." Is not this the city of the text, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?" It must be so, for we read again, "The wall of the city had twelve "foundations...the foundations of the wall of the city "were garnished with all manner of precious stones." (Revelation xxi. 2, 9; 13, 19.) In what a striking and beautiful manner does Scripture interpret itself!

"Abraham rejoiced to see my day," says our Lord; "he looked" says the text, "for the city which hath foundations:" "I was in the Spirit in the Lord's day," says St. John, and saw "that great city coming down from God." This city is the glorious abode of the Redeemer and His redeemed people, and shall come down to the earth and rest upon it in the day of His second appearing. For when the hurricane of wrath of which we spoke in the last lecture shall have spent its fury and swept its wreck into the burning lake, the earth shall lift its head out of the fire, fair, smiling, and peaceful, "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Peter iii. 13.) It shall "be filled with flocks of men," sevenfold its present population; they shall also "keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Over this obedient world, Jesus and His saints shall sway, from the new Jerusalem, God's gracious sceptre of righteousness and love; and men being thus blessed in the Redeemer, "all nations shall call Him blessed." (Psalm lxxii. 17.) St. John tells us these things in the plainest manner. Along with the vision of the city he announces, "I saw a new earth...I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them...and He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." He says in the same place concerning the saints, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them...they lived and reigned with Christ;" he says concerning their glorious abode, the new Jerusalem, "The nations...shall walk in the

“light of it: the kings of the earth do bring their glory
“and honour into it.” (Revelation xxi. 1, 3, 5; xx.
4; xxi. 24.) And when Jesus shall thus take the seat
of empire and reveal the holy Jerusalem and make
all things new, the assurance which God gave to the
patriarch shall be accomplished, IN HIS SEED ALL
FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.
“For the Lord of hosts shall bless” in that day,
“saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria
“the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.”
(Isaiah xix. 25.) These then were the gracious pur-
poses on the accomplishment of which Abraham’s heart
was set, when he looked for the city of God. They
had been communicated to him, as we have already
seen, before he left Chaldea; and St. Paul in the text
evidently means to tell us that they were the termina-
ting object of his faith through the remainder of his
pilgrim-life.

But what connection, it may be asked, was there
in Abraham’s mind, between these hopes and the land
of Canaan? why might he not have cherished them,
and still remained in Chaldea? This question suggests
very weighty and important considerations; and the
answer to it will teach us at once to admire God’s
wisdom in the past, and to look with definiteness of
expectation, for the fulfilment of His promises in the
future. There was a twofold reason, I conceive, for
God dealing with Abraham as He did. We must re-
member first, as has been already remarked, that at
the period of the patriarch’s call, the whole earth was
sinking into idolatry; and that if the purpose of God

was to be accomplished in Messiah coming of human race, to destroy the works of the Devil, it was absolutely necessary that a holy family and people should be preserved in the midst of the nations. And if Abraham was to be the head of that family and the father of that people, there were obvious reasons against his remaining in Chaldea. He had been himself an idolater along with his kindred and father's house who still continued so; and all his associations were idolatrous. It might not have been possible for him in such circumstances, without a perpetual miracle, to have maintained in his native land the worship of the true God, and to have preserved it in his family. It seemed good therefore to Divine wisdom at once to cut the bond, and to separate Abraham from all injurious influence; sending him where he was not known, and taking him under His own immediate guidance. For the same reason, as I conceive, the patriarch, with his son and grandson after him, continued to dwell in tents and migrated from one place to another. For Canaan also was idolatrous, and but for this Divine direction they might have formed associations there. And let me remark secondly, that God had a peculiar reason for appointing Canaan as the scene of their pilgrim-life. It was the destined scene of the fulfilment of the promises in which they trusted; it was to be the theatre of Messiah's sufferings, and the theatre also of His glory. There seems no reason to doubt that these patriarchs were aware of this. Abraham was instructed, as we shall see more fully afterwards, in the Divine purpose to provide in

that land an expiation for human guilt; and it is positively declared in the text, that he expected to see revealed in it the glory of Messiah. Let us observe the language made use of, "He went out...he sojourned "in the land of promise...with Isaac and Jacob the "heirs of the same promise; for he looked for the "city." These words shew plainly that there was a connection, in the mind of Abraham, between Canaan and the city of God, which did not subsist between that city and Chaldea. If we had not other scriptures to guide us, we should be greatly at a loss to understand this; but in their light, all is plain. CANAAN IS THAT LOCALITY OF THE NEW EARTH ON WHICH THE GLORIES OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE ESPECIALLY DISPLAYED; it is to be THE PLACE OF MESSIAH'S REST FOR EVER. All the prophets testify to this purpose of God. "His feet," says Zechariah speaking of the Redeemer, "shall stand in that day upon the Mount of "Olives, which is before Jerusalem...and the Lord "my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." (Zechariah xiv. 3—5.) Gethsemane the scene of His lowest humiliation, which beheld Him "sore amazed "and very heavy" for our sakes, was at the foot of that memorable mount; and the same locality shall be illuminated with His and His people's glory, when He comes again as the crowned and sceptred King. When Abraham's spiritual seed shall thus reign with Jesus in Mount Zion, his natural seed shall be gathered again, and shall be God's holy and obedient people; the earthly Jerusalem also and the cities of Judah shall be rebuilt. Nothing can be more express on this

point than the testimony of Jeremiah. "The days "come" he tells us, "that it shall no more be said, the "Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel "out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth that "brought" them "from all the lands whither He had "driven them: and I will bring them again into their "land that I gave unto their fathers." (Jeremiah xvi. 14, 15.) Again he tells us, "They shall yet use "this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities "thereof, The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, "and mountain of holiness." And of Jerusalem he tells us, it "shall be built to the Lord, from the tower "of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner...it shall not "be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever." (Jeremiah xxxi. 23, 38—40.) And when Israel shall have thus been gathered, and her cities builded again, her people shall be the spiritual fathers, guides, and teachers of all the earth. The days shall yet come, of which Isaiah and Micah and Zechariah have prophesied, when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be "established in the top of the mountains,...and all "nations shall flow unto it;" when "the law shall go "forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from "Jerusalem;" when "ten men of all languages of the "nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a "Jew." (Isaiah ii. 2; Micah iv. 2; Zechariah viii. 23.) God's word to Abraham shall then indeed find its accomplishment; in his seed, both spiritual and natural, all families of the earth shall be blessed. That word shall then also be accomplished, which promised to him personally the inheritance of Canaan

(Genesis xv. 7); he shall abide with his Saviour in that very locality over which he once wandered as a stranger and sojourner, and be the delighted witness of the glories of which it shall then be the eternal scene. What was in his days the land of promise, shall then be the land of blessing: the "pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," shall water the earthly Jerusalem; and rivers of living water going forth from her, shall refresh all the nations of the earth. "Every thing shall live," says the prophet, "whither the river cometh," and on the bank "shall grow trees, whose leaf shall not fade;" their fruit also "shall be for meat," and their "leaf for medicine." (Revelation xxii. 1; Ezekiel xlvii. 1—12.) And now then our question is answered; we understand what it was which bound Abraham to the land of Canaan. It was connected in the Divine purpose, and therefore in the patriarch's mind, with the fulfilment of God's eternal promises.

All this throws light on our Saviour's declaration that Abraham rejoiced and was glad, when he saw His coming day. For if the things of which we have now spoken, were present to his mental vision, he could not be otherwise than glad. Such joy-inspiring anticipations strengthened him also, as well they might, to leave his country and his father's house. They were a cordial to his heart, as he pursued his toilsome way, and kept it from sinking utterly, as the distant hills of his native land at last disappeared from his straining eye. They made him cheerfully content to

leave to his posterity the reversion of his earthly expectations in Canaan; he knew that when his Lord came, he should inherit that promised land. "My pilgrim-life shall be ended then," said Abraham, "when the holy Jerusalem, His dwelling-place, shall descend out of heaven from God; then shall I see the glory of Immanuel my promised Seed; then too shall I see this land of Canaan, no longer defiled by the bloody rites of idolatry, but the glory of all lands, and the light of salvation to all the nations of the earth. I am indeed, meanwhile, a stranger in it, but having these hopes, I am content."

A most striking illustration is thus afforded to us of the genuine nature and necessary results of faith. For the city which was the object of Abraham's expectation is not yet revealed, and it is needless therefore to point out that God's word must have been his only evidence that it should ever be revealed at all. The language of the Saviour, "Abraham saw my day," has already been referred to; it exhibits the patriarch's faith as "the substance of things hoped for." And this is the character of all true faith; "We look," says St. Paul, "at the things not seen" (II Corinthians iv. 18). Such language is a contradiction to sense. How can a man look, asks human reason, at things which he cannot see? Because God sees every thing, past, present, and to come; and through confidence in His veracity, we see with His eyes, and gaze upon invisibles. And it is no shadowy expectation, no uncertain hope which we are thus enabled to cherish. Abraham's whole life was influenced,

as we have now seen, by his faith in these promises of God ; calm confidence in the Divine veracity, and steady assurance of the fulfilment of His gracious words, clothed the far-distant future with the distinct characters of present reality. And it is so with every true Christian. He walks by faith : the life which he lives in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God (II Corinthians v. 7 ; Galatians ii. 20).

RESERVING for the next lecture, when the subject will come again before us, the peculiar application to the Hebrews, of this history of their father Abraham, let us consider in few words, the lessons which it teaches to us. His faith is our reproof ; his conduct is our example. It is a very common idea that the worthies of old time had a glimpse of Christ's coming to make atonement for sin ; but that there their faith terminated. There cannot be a greater misapprehension. We have learnt already from the history of Enoch, that they looked for His coming in Divine glory and majesty, to destroy the works of the devil. And I very much question whether the patriarch Abraham, living as he did, in a day of comparative darkness, was not better acquainted than we are, with the final purposes of God. St. John had not then announced his vision of the new Jerusalem, and yet Abraham looked for it. The Church has now been privileged with this vision for nearly two thousand years ; and yet very few of us understand it, very few of us know what to look for. We are not without fault in this ignorance. Speculation in matters of

prophecy, is indeed to be guarded against; but we are criminal in remaining ignorant of the great outlines of the purpose of God. This ignorance moreover will lead us seriously astray. Communion with God is the animating principle both of prayer and exertion in His cause; but if we are ignorant of His purposes, we cannot have communion with Him. And we shall labour in consequence, for what is not to be brought about, and pray for that in which He cannot hear us. This remark is especially applicable to the subject of missions. It is of the utmost importance that the Church of God, in her labours among the heathen, should understand the work which is given into her hands; God by her would "visit the Gentiles, to take "out of them a people for His name" (Acts xv. 14). Because if instead of understanding this, she expects to convert the whole world, and to bring about the reign of universal blessedness and peace, without Jewish instrumentality and the revelation of the new Jerusalem, she is expecting that which she shall never see. Disappointment will damp her zeal and paralyze her noblest energies. Let us shew ourselves then to be Abraham's children by cherishing the expectations of Abraham. These cheering expectations, let me further remark, will sustain the heart amid the trials and disappointments of time. There is no earthly hope which we can cherish, in which we are not doomed, in one way or other, to disappointment. All things were once very good; but the blight of sin has now passed over them, and they have become uncertain, transitory, and vain. But there is one thing, blessed

be God, to which neither uncertainty nor vanity belong,—that city whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise, of which it is little to say that it mocks the changes of time, for it shall endure through a changeless eternity. And remembering continually that we are its citizens, and looking for its glorious revelation, we shall be strengthened to bear up under the sorrows of an hour, by the prospect of joys which shall never end. By the same hope, let me observe, the hope which comforted the heart of Abraham, we shall be strengthened to follow that sainted patriarch's example, doing the will of God, however grievous to flesh and blood. We know well how the heart of man clings to his native country. Speaking of a native air heard in a foreign clime, the poet says—

"I deemed it the lament of men
Who languished for their native glen."

Inspiration itself has borne witness to this. "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him," says Jeremiah: "but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jeremiah xxii. 10). But this was the trial of Abraham. He was called to exile himself from the land of his nativity; and when "he went out," he returned no more. God indeed blessed him in all things, but still he was an exile. And if he did not weep sore after his kindred and father's house, if he was not a heart-sick and pining exile, the text informs us that it was because he looked for the city of God. His obedience then is our example. We are

not placed indeed in his peculiar circumstances, but this makes no essential difference. None of us may expect to finish our Christian course without being called to make many sacrifices, and to do many things in God's service from which nature would fain be excused. But the faith and hope of Abraham, that faith which looks for the recompense of the reward, will strengthen us, I repeat, to "do the works of Abraham," and will prepare us to be gathered at last into Abraham's bosom. Which may God grant to us of His infinite mercy!

LECTURE VI.

FAITH OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH.

HEBREWS XI. 11—13.

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive
ed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because
e judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang
ere even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars
the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore
numerable. These all died in faith, not having received the
omises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of
em, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers
nd pilgrims on the earth.”

THE Apostle, pursuing his illustrations of faith,
presents it to us in these verses, in its nature, its
eward, its natural and necessary results. The case of
Sarah, with which the text opens, is an apt illustration
of its nature; whilst the fulfilment of the promise on
which she relied, is an equally apt illustration of its
eward. The ample accomplishment, on the part of
the Divine Promiser, of all those good words on which
Abraham and Sarah together had relied, is next
referred to, in attestation of the certainty and abund-

ance of that reward. And the text then concludes with a general survey of the characters of Abraham and his family ; shewing us at once what faith is, and what its necessary results are. We are thus furnished with another proof of the correctness of St. Paul's definition of this grace : the truth of his statement that it obtains the approbation of God is also further established and confirmed.

Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

It is impossible to do justice to the meaning of these words without a brief reference to the dealings of God with Abraham and Sarah, recorded in the book of Genesis. Superficial readers of that book imagine that before Abraham left Chaldea, or at least as early as his arrival in Canaan, God made to him the promise of a son by Sarah. This is a most serious misapprehension of the truth of the matter, and renders the words before us totally unintelligible. For if the expostulation, "To me thou hast given no seed," and the taking of Hagar, by Sarah's counsel, to be his wife, were both subsequent to the promise in question, where was the faith either of Abraham or of Sarah ? They were patterns of unbelief rather than of trust in God. Again, we must remember that more than twenty-five years elapsed between Abraham's leaving Chaldea and the birth of Isaac. And if Sarah received

therefore at the beginning of that period, the Divine assurance that she should be the mother of the seed, it is impossible to understand the commendation here bestowed on her; for we find her at the end of it, within a few months of the birth of Isaac, laughing within herself, as if such a thing were impossible. She had meditated on the Divine promise for five-and-twenty years, and still she was not believing it! This could not be the case with the wife of the father of the faithful. But a right understanding of her history and of God's dealings with her and her husband, clears up these difficulties and completely explains the text.

God revealed His mind to Abraham and Sarah *by degrees*. When the patriarch came into Canaan, He told him that He would give that land to his seed. But was that seed to be an adopted child or a child of his own body? On that point God was silent. Abraham, naturally desirous of knowing the truth on so important a matter, ventured to say, in the words already quoted "To me thou hast given no seed: and lo, one "born in my house is mine heir." This led to a more unambiguous declaration of God's purpose. "This "shall not be thine heir" He said; "he that shall come "forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." But who was to be the mother of this son of Abraham? On that point God was still silent. It was whilst this silence continued, that Sarah counselled her husband to take, according to the custom of those times, a second and inferior wife. He followed the counsel, and a child was born to him; but the issue of this step was disappointment, and for fourteen years he had no

communication from on high. At the end of that period, and just a year previous to the birth of the promised seed, GOD BROKE THE SILENCE OF FOUR AND TWENTY YEARS, and declared that he should be the offspring of Sarah. The faith even of Abraham was hardly able at once to grasp this; and we need not be surprised that when an announcement so amazing was for the first time made to Sarah, she should have laughed within herself at the apparent impossibility of its fulfilment. But God sharply reproved her laughter, and “a reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.” Sarah took the reproof, and believed God. And “because she judged Him faithful who had promised,” she “was delivered of a child, when she was past age.” (Genesis xii.—xviii. xxi. 1, 2.)

I have entered into this explanation because it is of the utmost importance that we should understand the characters of the father and mother of the faithful. We find something like impatience in Abraham; and we find Sarah resorting to carnal devices to accomplish the Divine purpose; and so far they are not to be commended. But we do not find a single instance in the history of either, of disbelief of God’s word, after He had plainly spoken; in that point they are our patterns. And the faith of Sarah, in the instance now before us, corresponded in the most striking manner with the Apostle’s definition of faith. Two circumstances in her condition rendered it unpromising to the last degree, she had always been barren, and she was then ninety years old. It is certain therefore that

God's word was her only evidence that she should ever become a mother. But she took that word as her evidence, "she judged Him faithful;" and "through" this "faith" says the text, "Sarah herself," i.e. barren, aged Sarah was delivered of the child of promise. We see in this also the reward of faith. It was a rich reward, as the name of the child indicates; for Isaac signifies *laughter, gladness of heart*. "God" said the joyful mother, "hath made me to laugh...Who would have said to Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in my old age." (Genesis xxi. 6, 7. Boothroyd's Translation.) Let us remember this dealing of God, when we are disposed to question His faithfulness. SARAH, WITH HER SILVER HAIRS, AND HER INFANT AT HER BREAST, may well put unbelief to shame.

But the birth of Isaac was only the first fruits of this reward; he was the acorn from which the mighty oak was to spring.

Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Of Isaac came Jacob; of him came the twelve patriarchs; and of them came the countless thousands of Israel. The words before us state the exact truth, for the numbers of the chosen people exceeded all calculation. Two hundred and fifty years only after their fathers had gone down into Egypt "threescore

"and ten persons," Moses could congratulate them, "now the Lord hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude." (Deuteronomy x. 22.) And we read of them, four hundred and fifty years afterwards, "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude." (I Kings iv. 20.) This increase was preternatural, and was the effect of a peculiar blessing. And we need not ask the reason of this blessing if we attend to the language of the text. St. Paul tells us by the word "therefore," which looks back to the four preceding verses, that this extraordinary increase, this issuing of countless thousands from the loins of one man, "and him as good as dead," was the reward of faith. The promise of the seed and the promise of the land were one, and it was by faith in these promises that Abraham sojourned in the land. This also was the reason of his being called Abraham, which signifies the father of a multitude; he was so, the Apostle tells us, "in the sight of Him whom he believed." (Romans iv. 16, 17.) And the faith of Sarah co-operated with his, to bring about the accomplishment of these promises. We have already seen that her faith agreed with St. Paul's definition; and the same may be said of her husband's. "Against hope, he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken...He considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:...he was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also

“to perform.” (Romans iv. 18—21.) And it was because he thus honoured God, taking His word against reason, sense, and probability, as his evidence of the coming blessing, that he received so glorious a recompense. The words “them that honour me I will honour,” were thus accomplished in him and in his partner. She, because she judged God faithful, became the mother of the promised seed; and he, a feeble old man tottering on the verge of the grave, became, because he believed Him, the father of a progeny which no human arithmetic could number.

But this glorious recompense of faith was not bestowed during Abraham’s lifetime, or even during that of his son and grandson.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Abraham and Sarah had the Divine promise that their seed should be multiplied; but they did not witness its fulfilment. Sarah saw only Isaac; and even Abraham, who survived her for forty years, saw no more than Isaac’s family. Isaac in his turn, saw the families of Esau and Jacob; and Jacob saw the families of his twelve sons. The increase of the seed of promise was, in their days, very slow; within a few years of the death of Jacob, it amounted only to seventy souls. But the faith of “all these,” says the Apostle, though it was tried, remained unshaken; they

died in the steadfast assurance that the promises of God should be fulfilled. We must not however so lightly esteem the fathers of the holy nation, as to imagine that the multiplication of their seed was their chief object of faith and desire. Such a desire would have been purely selfish; and its fulfilment would not have been an object worthy of faith. A striking instance of the truth of this statement occurs in Old-Testament history. God threatened on one occasion, that He would destroy Israel; "and I will make of thee" He said to Moses, "a great nation." (Exodus xxxii. 9—14.) But Moses, instead of accepting the offer, besought Him to turn from His purpose. For the glory of God and the blessedness of His people were dearer in His servant's eyes than the aggrandisement of his own family and the honour of his own name. And it was just because these patriarchs had the spirit of Moses, that the promise of the multiplication of their seed was to them so precious. It was indissolubly connected with the furtherance of the Divine glory and the accomplishment of man's salvation. Of that seed was to come the Saviour, who in the fulness of time should make atonement for man's transgression; who should also bruise the destroyer's head, and bring in the eternal kingdom. He was to them the soul of all the promises; and it was in faith of His coming that they both lived and died. The context presented them to us as living in this faith; it told us that Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob after him, dwelt as pilgrims in the land of Canaan, because they looked for the revelation of the new Jerusalem

from heaven. And the text, following up the context, tells us that they died in it. Let us turn for confirmation of this, to the death-bed scene of Jacob. We find him blessing his twelve sons; uttering by the Spirit of God, sure prophecies of the multiplication of their seed; foretelling also the position in the land of Canaan, and the individual history of the tribe which should proceed from each of them. But these things were not the terminating object of the patriarch's expectation: "I have waited" he exclaims, "for THY *"SALVATION, O Lord."* He had waited for it, and was then waiting; he had lived and was dying in faith of the coming Saviour. We have further proof of this in the rest of his dying words. In the blessing of Judah he makes distinct mention of the Shiloh, adding that "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be;" and in the blessing of Joseph he declares that from the mighty God there shall yet proceed "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." (Genesis, xlix. 1—27.) Jesus then was the object of Jacob's dying expectation; Jesus, as the good Shepherd who should give His life for the sheep; as the rock on which God's Church should be builded and should rest; as the King of righteousness and peace, to whom all nations should be gathered. The details of the book of Genesis explain the words of the text.

What makes this example of faith more striking, is that the object of it was "seen" by these patriarchs "afar off." Thick darkness then brooded over all the earth; and ages were to roll over the world before the promise of God to send His Son, even the first time,

could be accomplished. But "faith is the substance of "things hoped for;" and though the glorious Sun of righteousness appeared in their days, through the dim distance, like a twinkling star, these patriarchs saw His revelation. For what appears to the naked eye a twinkling star, is a sun when seen through the telescope, and fills the heavens with light. Judging by the eye, we should pronounce it an easy thing to extinguish one of these spangles which adorn the heavens; but the discoveries of the telescope inform us that no created power can move from the place assigned to it by the Almighty, the most inconsiderable of them all. And the faith of these patriarchs was like the telescope; it gave body and substantial form to its yet very distant object, revealing its vast, its infinite dimensions. Human reason derided their expectations as visionary, and of more than uncertain fulfilment; but they "were persuaded of them." They knew them to be founded on the promises of God. And assured that no created power could make the Almighty falter in His purpose or break His pledged word, they "embraced" these promises, as their hope, their confidence, their stay. We have already learned that Abraham was strengthened by them, to leave his native land and sojourn as an exile in Canaan: we have also learned from Jacob's own mouth, that they cheered his troubled life and smoothed his dying pillow.

Let us also observe the result of this faith: they "confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the "earth." For the whole earth had at that period,

departed from the true God, into open and shameless idolatry ; and those who knew His name and trusted in His salvation, could not be otherwise than strangers in it. This therefore was the case with these servants of God. The thoughts and feelings, the manners and ways of an idolatrous world were strange to them ; and their principles of action were equally strange to the people among whom they dwelt. They were also pilgrims ; this world was not their home. It did not meet their desires, and they did not meet its wishes ; they could abide in it for a season, on their way to a better country, but more they could not do. Their lives declared this openly. Abraham left his native land in testimony against the Chaldean, and sojourned in Canaan in testimony against the Canaanite. And his son and grandson followed his example, "dwelling "in tabernacles," and refusing to seek or to accept of any settlement, lest their families should be contaminated by the wickedness of the land. For while Esau, who was destitute of their faith, found an early settlement in Mount Seir, "Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his "father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan."

"HEARKEN to me," says the Lord by the mouth of Isaiah, "ye that follow after righteousness, ye that "seek the Lord—ye that know righteousness, the "people in whose heart is my law ; fear ye not the "reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings ; "look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that "bare you, for I called him alone, and blessed him and "increased him. The Lord shall comfort Zion." (Isaiah li. 1—11.) For there were a people in the

prophet's day who feared the God of Israel, and were exposed for doing so, to the reproach of the godless heathen. God therefore spake a word of comfort to them. He reminded them of His faithfulness to the father and mother of their nation; He assured them that He would be as faithful to them, He bade them be of good cheer. The Apostle's train of thought in the text and context, is identical, for he was addressing a people in the very same circumstances. The believing Hebrews knew righteousness and followed after it. They trusted with righteous Abel in the great propitiation; they had fled with righteous Noah, to the shelter of God's ark of safety. They also diligently sought the Lord as righteous Enoch had done. And for all this, they were reviled by their unbelieving countrymen, their goods were spoiled, their lives were threatened. Be of good cheer, says St. Paul. Think of your father Abraham, how he left country and father's house, because he believed God; how in the same faith he waited for the promised seed; how that seed at last came, and made him the father of our mighty nation. Think also "on Sarah that bare you"—she bare us all by the power of the same faith. The God of the parents will be faithful to their children; only believe.

The words of the text however had an application yet more special, to the feelings of those to whom they were addressed. The Hebrews were disappointed, as is plain from other parts of this epistle, that their Lord delayed so long to come and receive them to Himself. Hope deferred had at last made the heart sick; they

had become impatient, and were tempted to murmur against God. It was not therefore, as I conceive, without an important reason, that the Apostle reminded them, that Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, "*all died in faith, not having received the promises.*" It was in effect saying, if it is God's will that you die as your fathers have done, and that Christ come not in your day, be content with the Divine appointment, and die in faith. These promises may be yet comparatively far off, but they are much nearer now than in the days of these illustrious saints. Well then, my brethren, may you follow their example, being persuaded of these promises and embracing them. And though you may have passed from this earthly scene before their accomplishment, well does it become you, for the sake of the joy which they minister, to bear all earthly suffering and to sacrifice all earthly joy.

This whole subject applies to ourselves. The faith of these saints is our reproof. How very different were their circumstances from ours ! There was in their days no written revelation ; no evidence from accomplished promise and prophecy, of the faithfulness of God ; no miraculous witness to the true religion ; no visible proof of the reality of redeeming love. Theirs therefore was faith in its purest form ; God had spoken, and they believed Him. It is very different with us. We have God's written revelation, handed down to us as such, by the concurrent testimony of believing generations ; we have evidence the most ample, from accomplished promise and prophecy, that all its declarations are true ; we have miraculous witness that Jesus

is the Saviour; we have His bitter cross as the visible demonstration of the love of God to man. That love was in their days, mere promise; in ours it is glorious accomplishment: it was then a distant, twinkling star; it is now a meridian sun, filling the heavens with its light, and cheering us with the warmth of its gracious beams. It is astonishing that in their day, such faith as they possessed was found in a human heart; it is equally astonishing that in our day, any unbelief is found. The one circumstance proves that Divine grace can triumph over the greatest disadvantages; the other proves that man's slowness of heart can render nugatory the greatest advantages. With all our spiritual privileges, Abraham the Chaldean idolater is our pattern of faith; and the most honourable place which we can hope to occupy is that of his disciples and his children. (Romans iv. 11—25. Galatians iii. 29.) Happy those who are his disciples, who are his children! The Saviour has now gone to prepare that new Jerusalem for which Abraham looked, He is preparing it for Abraham's sainted family on the earth—the people who trust in God. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

Their conduct also is our example. The world has not changed its character since the days of these early disciples; and confession that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth is therefore to this day, the result of faith in God. The mass of mankind are utterly forgetful of God; their maxims, principles, and motives of action are not taken from His word: their cares and interests, their joys and sorrows, have nothing to do with Him or with His service. But faith

"worketh by love;" and the believer therefore cannot be forgetful of God. His maxims and principles are taken from the word of truth: his ruling motive is that the love of Christ constrains him: the continual care of his life is to please God and win His approbation; and all his joys, sorrows, and interests partake of the same holy character. He cannot therefore be otherwise than a stranger on the earth; the world does not understand him, and he does not understand the world. Unbelief makes us strangers to God, and enables us to understand the world; and faith brings us near to God, and makes us strangers to the world. This was indeed the case in early days. "Ye walked in time past" says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "according to the course of this world,...being strangers from the covenants of promise...and without God." But ye are now, he continues, "made nigh by the blood of Christ;...ye are no more strangers...but of the household of God." (Ephesians ii. 2, 12, 13, 19.) The world as a necessary consequence, ceased to understand them. "They think it strange," says St. Peter, "that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (I Peter iv. 4.) And so long as God and the world preserve their respective characters, this must be the result of faith.

And the same faith which makes us strangers, will teach us also to be pilgrims on the earth. The characters indeed are one; the pilgrim's habit and language are both strange; he is passing through a strange country to the land in which he seeks a home. He follows, in doing so, the highest of all examples.

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus “knew that His hour was come,” “Holy Father,” were His words, “I come to thee” (John xiii. 1; xvii. 11). The Father’s bosom was the resting-place to which that Blessed Pilgrim looked. And Christ’s bosom is, after His example, the resting-place to which His people look; they are “not of the world,” even as He was “not of the world;” and they judge with His servant, that to be with Him, “is far better,” (John xvii. 11, 16; Philippians i. 23). He that is of this mind, will still further follow the example of these sainted patriarchs, by shewing it in his life. The word “confessed,” signifies made open profession; and with this, the record of their lives agrees. We must shew by our life in the family, by the way in which we order our houses, by our dealings in business, and by all our conversation among men, that we have faith in Christ, and are indeed the people of God. Profession ought to be an index of reality, an index so plain that those who run may read. Being thus “followers of them “who through faith and patience inherit the promises,” we shall at last obtain their blessing; for “the world “passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth “the will of God abideth for ever.” (I John ii. 17.) Which may God of His infinite mercy grant to us!

LECTURE VII.

FAITH'S RESULTS AND REWARD.

HEBREWS XI. 14—16.

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.”

WE have just been told concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they were persuaded of God's promises and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It was this hearty persuasion which strengthened them to make such a confession; “for they that say such things,” the Apostle continues in the words before us, i. e. they that surrender their part and portion in the world that now is, “declare plainly that they seek” another. “And truly,” he goes on to say, had these patriarchs “been mindful of the country,” Ur of the Chaldees, “from whence they came out, they might have had “opportunity to have returned.” But they did not

return. And this was not because they preferred Canaan; for Canaan was not their country, it was the land wherein they were strangers. They sought "a better country, even an heavenly;" and therefore their lives were those of men who acted for God's approbation, and had respect to the recompense of His reward. And the Apostle gives us to understand that they have obtained what they sought. For in recompense of their faith and self-denying obedience, and because "He hath prepared for them a city" of habitation, "God" he declares, "is not ashamed to be called their God." Such is the substance of these verses. We shall now, by God's help, enter on their consideration in detail.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek A FATHERLAND.

I have rendered the last word of this verse with the intensity of the original, which signifies a home, a native country, a fatherland. A man must have some home to look to, some country which he can call his, some land of which he can say,

"This is my own, my native land,"

or his heart will faint within him. And if these patriarchs therefore made open confession that they could not find such a country on the earth, it is plain that there was some home beyond it on which their hearts were set, some fatherland with which these sacred feelings were associated. But why was it that

they could not be contented with this earth as their country? why was it that the whole world could not provide them with *a home*? Let us carry back our thoughts to the happy days of our childhood, and conjure up the nameless charm which that sacred word brings along with it. We were then a family of brothers and sisters, dwelling under one paternal roof, and bound together by that common tie; we went in and out at the bidding of one father and mother, and their will and word were law to us. Nor were the inhabitants of the earth such a family as this in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Alas! it was far otherwise. They knew for themselves, and loved and feared the great and good Parent of mankind: but the people among whom they were, knew not His very name; and instead of keeping His commandments, bowed down to dumb idols, and served the works of their own hands. We need not wonder then that these holy patriarchs could not feel themselves at home in such a world, that they could not look round on brutish idolaters, and recognize themselves as dwelling among brethren. Let us look on the matter in another light. The charm which endears our native country, is that we have been accustomed from infancy to the manners, ways and habits of its people; we dislike the manners and ways of a foreign land, and long for our own country and our own dear people again. Now the manners and ways of the idolatrous heathen among whom they dwelt, were totally dissimilar to those of these godly patriarchs; and they could not therefore feel themselves among their own

people, or recognize this earth as their own country. But they cherished the hope of one day finding themselves at home, of one day finding a country which they could truly call their own. They looked for the regeneration, when the kingdom of their Father should come, when His name should be hallowed, and His will should be done on earth as now it is done in heaven. They knew that they should then find a people whose feelings, manners, and ways should be like their own; and that with that people, even all the company of the just, they should be privileged to serve and glorify God for ever. For they waited, as the context tells us, for the revelation of the city of God, "the heavenly Jerusalem;" they expected to come to "the general assembly and Church of the first-born," the destined heirs of its glory; they knew that He was its "builder and maker," "of whom the whole "family in heaven and earth is named." (Hebrews xii. 22, 23; Ephesians iii. 15.) And the hope of being one day in His blessed presence, of finding themselves with His children and their brethren, with His people and their people—this hope, I repeat, cherished in the secret of their hearts, enabled them while on earth to endure their pilgrim-lot.

But they did more than endure it; it was the object of their deliberate choice. St. Paul goes on to say,—

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly.

Ur of the Chaldees, as has been already mentioned, was the country from whence they came out, and Canaan was the land in which they sojourned. The time of Abraham's sojourning was an hundred years; whilst that of Isaac and Jacob, was during the term of their natural lives. They had abundant opportunity then to have returned whence they came; no man detained them in Canaan against their will. And God on His part, to try what was in them, seemed to design to drive them out of it. For He sent, during the life of each of them, such sore and grievous famines on that land of promise, that they were compelled successively to arise and leave it. (Genesis xii. 10; Genesis xxvi. 1; Genesis xlvii. 11—13.) They had then a fair excuse for returning to the land of their nativity. But they took no advantage of it; Isaac went down to Gerar, whilst Abraham, and Jacob after him, found a temporary refuge in Egypt. Their eyes however were still toward Canaan; Abraham and Isaac returned on the first opportunity, and Jacob with his dying breath, laid it as a duty on his children. (Genesis xlviii. 21.) It is most striking to observe the determination of the patriarchs on this subject. When Abraham's faithful servant proposed to take Isaac to Chaldea, that he might choose for himself a wife from among the kindred of his father, "BEWARE **"THOU"** said the aged man of God, **"THAT THOU** **"BRING NOT MY SON THITHER AGAIN."** (Genesis xxiv. 6.) And this was not because Canaan was fairer than Chaldea: it was the better, the heavenly country which was fairer in their eyes. That better country is

Immanuel's land, the blessed rest of Jesus; the rest "which remaineth for the people of God," (Hebrews iv. 9,) and which shall be revealed in the day of glory. These patriarchs knew that if they were to be instrumental in its revelation, it was absolutely needful that they should preserve their families uncontaminated by idolatry and wickedness, and cleave to the land of promise. And setting aside therefore the love of country and every feeling to which the heart by nature clings, they continued cheerfully and gladly to obey the voice of the Lord.

We discern in all this the genuine character and necessary results of faith. And in what remains of the text, we have a more glorious proof than we have ever yet met with, that it wins God's approbation and obtains the recompense of His reward. For we read,

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city.

Three things occur to the mind on the perusal of these words. Our attention is arrested, in the first place, by the astonishing greatness of the blessing bestowed on these patriarchs. It is drawn in the second place, to the proof which God has given, that He really has bestowed it. And we have in the third place, the most distinct and positive assurance that this blessing was the recompense of faith.

1st. The blessing itself is contained in few words, but no human language can express their import. "God"

says the Apostle, "is not ashamed to be called their God." Here is first, eternal life,—"*is* not ashamed;" second, the esteem and friendship of the Most High,—"*not* ashamed to be called their God;" third, the assurance of infinite and boundless blessedness,—"*GOD...their* God." A little consideration will prove the justice of this comment. Eternal life is not the happiness of the spirit only; it is the glorious resurrection of the body also, and the enjoyment both by body and spirit, of the blessed God for ever. We are taught this by our Lord Himself. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead. "Now that the dead are raised" He said, "even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him." (Luke xx. 37, 38.) These words refer us to the book of Exodus, where God at the bush desires Moses to tell the children of Israel, "the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Exodus iii. 15.) This proves, said our Lord to the Sadducees, that when God spake to Moses at the bush, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive in His bosom and awaiting the resurrection of the just; for God is not a God of the dead; all whose God He is, live unto Him. By parity of reason then, these patriarchs were alive in the same bosom, awaiting the same resurrection, when St. Paul wrote this epistle; for he says, not that God was not, as if He spake of a

past transaction, but that He is not ashamed to be called their God. They shall also be alive in that bosom, awaiting that resurrection until the end of time; for their God, as was declared at the bush, is His memorial "unto all generations." And after the promise of resurrection shall have been accomplished in the Divine faithfulness, they shall abide in that bosom in consummation of bliss to all eternity; for their God, he said again, is "my name for ever." It shall be the consummation of bliss indeed, for they have the esteem and friendship of the Most High. The spirit of Abraham in the bosom of God, was enjoying this sacred communion when Isaiah prophesied; God said then of Israel, they are "the seed of 'Abraham my friend.'" (Isaiah xli. 8.) The language of the text shews this in a most striking manner. We form our judgment of a man from the company which he keeps, and from the character of those whom he chooses for his friends. The righteous are ashamed to be seen in company with the wicked; the just and upright are ashamed of any connection with the dishonest and the vile. We are permitted by God, to form in the same manner our judgment of His character. To the end of time, He says to Moses in the words already quoted, nay to all eternity I desire to be judged by this, viz. that I was and am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While the world shall last, I desire that their histories be read, and that those who read them say, these were the men whose friend the Almighty was. I am "not ashamed" that my name should be associated with theirs, and that my

character should be judged of by what was seen in them. It is impossible to conceive commendation to go beyond this; God Himself cannot say more. And when we consider that He who speaks thus is GOD, the Source of infinite joy, and that because He is their God, the ever-flowing fountain of living waters is freely and for ever at their command, imagination is baffled, and thought confounded. It cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive the largeness of their blessing.

2nd. God has given substantial proof that He has bestowed this blessing on them, that He "is not ashamed to be called their God;" for "He hath prepared for them a city." This city we know to be the heavenly Jerusalem, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The context informs us that Abraham looked for it, yea that it was the common expectation of these sainted patriarchs. Jesus referred to it when He said to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2, 3.) For this, as we have already learnt, is the purpose of the New Jerusalem; it is destined as the eternal abode of the Redeemer and His glorified saints. What a proof have we here that God is not ashamed of His people! He has prepared a city in which He shall dwell with them for ever. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shall be seen by the side of their Divine Redeemer in that glorious abode, acknowledged, honoured, and exalted; yea they shall speak

with Him "face to face, as a man speaketh with his "friend." No one may speak then in disparagement of those whom the Lord commends.

3rd. This inconceivably great and unspeakably precious blessing was bestowed on these patriarchs as the reward of faith; because they left their native land and sacrificed this world's advantages, having respect to the word and promise of a faithful God. "Now "they desire a better country, even an heavenly," says St. Paul, "wherefore God is not ashamed to be their "God;" yea, in eternal memorial of His esteem of faith and righteousness, "hath prepared for them a "city." Let no one be offended at this saying; let no one say, surely no righteousness of ours can win the approbation of the Most High. We have already learnt from the case of Enoch, a lesson of the utmost importance, which is confirmed by the words before us. It is of grace that we are permitted to return to God, and accepted of Him in Christ. But after we have returned and have been accepted, we may so walk by the Holy Spirit given to us, as to attract the notice of His approving eye. It was so with these holy patriarchs. Abraham is the prototype of the justified by faith, the saved by grace; and yet he with his son and grandson, are examples of that righteousness which pleases God. He saw that their hearts were set on His promises; that they did not look back with one feeling of regret to that wicked world which they had left; that every worldly thought, feeling, and desire were swallowed up in communion with His

mighty purpose, in earnest longing to promote His glory. And therefore He was not ashamed to associate His name with theirs. He was not ashamed to do so, though He was the great God and they were children of the dust; yea, He was not ashamed, though He was the Holy One, and they were full of imperfection, sin, and shortcoming. For He knew that these shortcomings were their burden and grief, and that their hearts were His alone.

It is needless to say that the sacrifices made by these patriarchs for the name and service of God, are not to be compared, for an instant, with a recompense so glorious as this. They left their country and kindred; they were sojourners in a strange land; they were contented to seem, in the eyes of men, a singular people, and perhaps to be the laughing-stock of the heathen. But in exchange for an earthly home thus willingly abandoned, and for the favour of man thus cheerfully sacrificed, they have found an eternal home in the bosom of Godhead, they have been privileged with the esteem and friendly regard of the Most High. Theirs has been indeed the choice of wisdom. May we, through Divine mercy, be found as truly wise!

IF there was any thing in which a Hebrew gloried, it was in being a circumcised son of Abraham. St. Paul had reminded the believing Jews at Rome, in an epistle written a few years previously, that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision," that he might be "the father of circumcision, to them who are "not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in

“the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.” (Romans iv. 11, 12.) And he now tells their believing brethren in Palestine, what these steps were, that they might know in what they boasted, when they called that sainted patriarch their father. Such a boast, the Apostle would say, lays you under the obligation of following his bright example. Do you find it a hard thing to give up the world, to have your property spoiled, your persons denounced, your lives threatened? Abraham shewed that he sought a country by confessing himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. Are you tempted to look back with regret on worldly advantages sacrificed; are you tempted to return to the religion of your fathers, that you may secure them again? Abraham and your fathers Isaac and Jacob after him, were not even “mindful of the country from whence they came out;” if it had been otherwise, “they might have had opportunity to have returned.” Are you sometimes tempted to ask, for what are all these sacrifices and what shall be their recompense? The God of the fathers will be the God of the children: following the steps of their faith you shall yet “sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew viii. 11.)

This subject is also full of consolation, instruction, and warning, applicable to all ages of the Church.

It is full of consolation. It was not written for their sakes alone, that God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham and his sons. That

patriarch "received the sign of circumcision,...that he "might be the father of all them that believe, though "they be not circumcised; that righteousness might "be imputed unto them also." (Romans iv. 11.) And again we read, "They which be of faith are blessed "with faithful Abraham." (Galatians iii. 9.) So that if we believe on Jesus as these patriarchs did, we are heirs to the blessing of the text, in all its richness and inconceivably vast amount: He who is their God will be our God also. He will not be ashamed to be called so; He is ashamed of none that trust in Him: He said to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me "in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 42, 43.) And if we look for the revelation of His glory as these patriarchs looked, that glory shall yet be bestowed on us, to our eternal joy. The crown of righteousness which "at "that day, the righteous Judge shall give," is not for Apostles only, but for "all them also that love His "appearing." (II Timothy iv. 8.) Moreover, He who said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis xvii. 1), can enable us to follow our father's bright example, exhibiting in all we do, the same blessed fruit of faith. It is not that we shall be unconscious of sins and shortcomings: they cleaved to these sainted patriarchs, and will cleave to us to the end. But with all its imperfections and shortcomings, the life and conversation of the man who trusts in redeeming mercy, looks for the eternal kingdom, and has a reference in all which he does, to God's service and glory, is as far removed above that of the mere worldling, as the heaven is high above the earth.

And God shall yet make manifest that this has been His judgment; that He has discerned between the righteous who serve Him, and the wicked who serve Him not (Malachi iii. 18); and that He has not been unobservant of the work and labour of love which His people have shewed toward His name. (Hebrews vi. 10.) He shall stretch out His hand to them from the throne, saying, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (Matthew xxv. 34.) And when those on whom that blessing is pronounced, "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew xiii. 43), the Divine approbation of faith and righteousness shall be made manifest, as the light, for ever and ever. It shall indeed be known in that day, that "God is not ashamed" of His people; for these things shall not be done in a corner. The city which He has prepared, and in which He will dwell with them for ever, is set on an hill, even on Mount Zion, and cannot be hid. And when all creatures shall repair to it, to pay their adoring homage to the Eternal King, they shall behold, not these sainted patriarchs only, but all His faithful people. They shall see them by His side, acknowledged and honoured as His trusted servants, His confidential friends and ministers, the children of His love. Job who was contemporary with these patriarchs, expresses their very hope. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," he exclaims, "and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job xix. 25, 26.) And on the mount of transfiguration, which was designed as a foreshewing of the kingdom (Matthew xvi. 28;

Matthew xvii. 1; II Peter i. 16), the disciples beheld Moses and Elias, and lo, as friend with friend, "THEY WERE TALKING WITH JESUS." These disciples being still in mortal flesh, were "sore afraid" when thus surrounded with glory; but Jesus touched them and said even then, "Arise, and be not afraid." (Matthew xvii. 1—7.) And when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, such fear shall be gone for ever. The glory of God shall be the light of the new Jerusalem, and shall be reflected with a brilliancy which no mortal eye could look upon, from the city itself which shall be of "pure gold, like unto clear glass," from the gates of pearl, and from the garniture of chrysolite, topaz, amethyst, and "all manner of precious stones." (Revelation xxi. 10—23.) But the eye of the resurrection-body shall be able to endure it all, and look "undazzled" by the blaze, upon "unclouded Deity." Glorious hope! Blessed, everlasting consolation!

This subject is full of instruction also. Under the experience of the afflictions and disappointments of life, many tell us that they comfort themselves with the hope of a better world. And when a member of their family, or any of their friends depart from this world, we very frequently hear, "They are gone, we trust, to a better." And this language is, alas, too often used by those and concerning those who, in their life and conversation, are and were conformed to all the evil ways of this world. Let us be instructed on this point by the text. The holy patriarchs of whom we have been speaking, desired a better world; but

they shewed their meetness for it by open and manifest separation from the sins and vanities of the world that now is. And this separation was as hearty as it was open; they were not even mindful of the follies which they had left behind them. This is the religion which pleases God, and prepares for the kingdom of heaven. It appears in the life, but its seat is in the heart. Let us "remember Lot's wife." (Luke xvii. 32.) Her feet left Sodom, while her heart still lingered in it; and turning back to take a last look of the scene of her sinful pleasures, "she became a pillar of salt." (Genesis xix. 26.) She is a beacon on the one hand, to warn us from a fatal shore; the example of these patriarchs is a light from God on the other, revealing the way of life. Let us follow that example then. Turning our backs upon the world, and setting our faces heavenward, let us with steadfastness of purpose pursue this way. Abhorring that which is evil and cleaving to that which is good, and making it the one aim of our lives and actions to do our Father's will and glorify His holy name, let us look for His eternal kingdom. If we are not found doing so, our hopes of a better world are all delusion. "There shall in no wise enter into" Christ's holy city, "anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Revelation xxi. 27.)

We must remark therefore finally, that this subject is full of warning. God saw that these patriarchs believed His word: He who reads the heart discerned that His glory was the object for which they lived, and that His promises were their expectation. This faith

and righteousness won His holy approbation ; He was not ashamed to be connected with such men, "to be called their God." But if this be true, the opposite is also true. If this spirit of faith and obedience be lacking ; if God see that we are living for no higher object than our own interest, and that we have no expectation beyond this present world, He will surely be ashamed of us ; He will not be called our God. For the character of God is implicated in that of His people, and He cannot allow Himself to be called the God of the unbelieving, the disobedient, and the worldly. The covenant of baptism is here no refuge for the wicked. A righteous father has a rebellious and abandoned son. You say to the parent, Is that youth your child ? I am ashamed to own him, is the reply, I blush to be called his father. And so shall it be in the awful day that is coming. Though they have been baptized in His name, God will disown the unbelieving before assembled worlds ; yea He will sever all connection between His purity and their defilement, and drive them from His presence for ever. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," but His face "is against them that do evil."

God grant us in that day, to "have right to the "tree of life, and to enter in, through the gates, into "the city !"

LECTURE VIII.

FAITH'S SACRIFICE IN ABRAHAM.

HEBREWS XI. 17—19.

“By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

SOME may think that we have already dwelt too long on the history of the patriarch Abraham. This however is not the mind of St. Paul; he continues his reference to it, in the verses which we have just read. We may certainly attribute this in part, to the veneration which he knew the Hebrews to entertain for Abraham; but he had another reason. His object is to present illustrations of faith; and the history of “the father of all them that believe,” necessarily abounds with such illustrations, beyond that of any man who ever lived in the world. Let us take as an example, that part of it to which the text refers. It reveals

to us, at a glance, the nature, the results, and the reward of faith. We see its nature, viz. confidence in God, in a more striking manner than it has ever yet been displayed to us. In the cases hitherto cited, we have had words or promises of God believed ; but in this case we have a man, in the absence of all word, yea left in the darkness of bewildering contradiction, trusting God in that darkness, and falling back on His everlasting faithfulness. We see its results also in a more striking manner than any former case displays. The son bound on the altar and prepared for death by the father's hand, shews the unhesitating, unquestioning, devoted obedience which such glorious confidence in God inspires. While the same son restored with renewed assurance of blessing, and clasped to the joyful father's bosom, testifies to the rich reward which confidence in God and obedience to His word are sure to meet with from His generous hand.

It may assist us to a clearer understanding of this deeply interesting portion of the patriarch's history, if we consider, first, the obedience of Abraham ; second, the faith which strengthened him to obey ; and third, the reward which that faith and obedience received.

I. Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

He "was tried" or tempted. "It came to pass," we read in the book of Genesis, "that God did tempt

“ Abraham. Take now ” He said to him (as the words may be literally rendered), “ that son, that only one of thine, whom thou lovest, that ISAAC ; and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (Genesis xxii. 1, 2.) We are not to understand from this, that God can tempt us, in the common acceptation of that term. St. James tells us expressly that as “ God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.” (James i. 13.) It is the devil’s work to do this. He sets forbidden gratifications before us, that he may excite evil desires, and thereby draw us into sin. But God nevertheless may tempt. He may bring us into circumstances in which it is a severe trial to nature or to grace to do His will ; and then commanding us to do it, may prove thereby what is in us. It was thus that He now tried or tempted Abraham. The trial to nature is apparent on the face of the command given to him : every word of it seems to have been designed to pierce deeper into his heart than that which preceded. His son was to be taken from him ; his only one, whom he loved as a son and as an only one ; his Isaac, for whom he had waited five-and-twenty years, and at whose birth he had laughed for joy. That son was growing up before his father’s eye, the joy and comfort of his aged heart, when God came thus suddenly upon him and demanded his cherished treasure. And he was not to be sent away as Ishmael had been ; that would have been a small thing in comparison : he was to die. Nor was death to visit him according to the laws of nature, and as

the effect of disease ; the pang would in that case have been alleviated, for he might have breathed his last in his father's arms : he was to die by violence. The father's feelings moreover were not to be spared by his being permitted to be absent from the bloody tragedy ; he was to be present, he was to be an actor, nay the principal actor in that tragedy ; he was to slay his son, he was to bereave his old age with his own hand, of its cherished stay and comfort. Such was God's will, such was the command which it pleased Him to give to Abraham. And dreadful as nature's trial was, we almost forget its severity in the much severer trial of grace ; for it was " he that " had received the promises," who " offered up his only-begotten son." Abraham had received the express and oft-repeated promises of God that Isaac should be the father of the great nation from whom the Messiah was to come. Isaac cannot die then, the patriarch might have said, for these promises must be fulfilled. But he must die, he might again have said, for God has spoken the word. If Isaac die, God's promise fails ; His command is violated, if Isaac live. Here was in truth a perplexity : the man of faith must have been indeed " in a strait betwixt two." He had another son, and might have hoped, in the event of Isaac's death, to have become, through him, the father of the promised seed. But that hope was now cut off : Ishmael had been sent away by God's express command, and on His solemn assurance that " in Isaac " the promised seed should be called. St. Paul refers to this assurance in the text, and with singular propriety calls him con-

cerning whom it was given, Abraham's "only-begotten son." He was so in effect: on his life the father's hopes depended, and his death was the extinction of them all. But the spirit of the man of God rose above these perplexities, the father refused to listen to the pleadings of nature. Having received the command, he "rose up early, and took Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him." When he approached it on the morning of the third day, "he took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son," he took also "the fire in his hand, and a knife," and "they went both of them together." Arrived at the fatal spot, "Abraham built an altar, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and STRETCHED FORTH HIS HAND, AND TOOK THE KNIFE TO SLAY HIM." (Genesis xxii. 3, 6, 9, 10.) Thus grace triumphed, and nature also, because sustained by grace: the sacrifice was offered up on Abraham's part, he had obeyed the Lord.

II. Faith strengthened Abraham, we are told, for this wondrous act of obedience. What remains of the text may be understood in two ways; we shall take it in both. He offered "his only-begotten son" says St. Paul (to take one rendering),

By faith...accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also HE HAD, IN A MANNER, received him.

If faith be confidence in God, it supposes God to have spoken. Here then is ample matter for consideration; God in this instance, had spoken twice, and His words were at variance with each other. He had said to Abraham, five and twenty years before this, "my covenant will I establish with Isaac"... "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Genesis xvii. 21; xxi. 12.) He now said, "take thy son... Isaac... and offer him for a burnt-offering." Now in which of these words, let us ask, was Abraham believing? to which of them was he looking, when he offered up his son? Was he looking to the latter word, believing that it neutralized the former? This would not have been faith. He might have as well looked to the former, believing that it neutralized the latter, and refused to give up the child. Abraham was looking to neither, but to GOD HIMSELF. The words must have distracted him; it was impossible to reconcile them. But he knew that God would reconcile and bring them both to pass; and holding fast his confidence in Him he went on to do His will. This discovers faith to us in its root and essence. It is more than a mere belief of words. We believe the word of God because we rely on the Speaker. If Abraham's faith had been a mere belief of words, in what a condition would he now have been! But his faith (and he is the pattern of faith) was CONFIDENCE IN THE GOD WHO HAD SPOKEN THEM. Confidence in God, implies that we look for something from His hand; and it is this expectation which sustains the heart in trial. What then was Abraham looking for, on this trying occasion?

what was the expectation which sustained his heart? May we say that he was looking for the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life, and that these hopes made him willing to surrender Isaac, and every earthly good? The thought is unworthy both of God and of Abraham. Isaac's life was no mere earthly good; he was the Seed from whom the Christ should come, and Abraham's dearest hopes therefore centred in the child. If these hopes had been shipwrecked in Isaac's untimely death, his hope of salvation would have perished with them. May we say then that the patriarch expected that God would interpose at the last, and stay his hand from slaying the child of promise? I cannot believe that the patriarch had such an expectation. It turns his trial into a mere exhibition, to suppose so; making it, in fact, no trial. It is besides contrary to the declaration of the text, which sheds the blessed light of God upon this deeply interesting subject. He "offered up his only-begotten son" says St. Paul, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even "from the dead." It is plain from these words that he expected him to die. But it is equally plain that his confidence remained unshaken that he who should die on that morning, should be the father of the promised Seed. And there was only one way, as it appeared to Abraham, in which both these things could happen. He expected therefore, in that way, the manifestation of Divine mercy; he believed that God would raise him from the dead. The thing was indeed, as man would say, impossible, but to Abraham's God, as the patriarch's past experience told him, nothing was im-

possible. He had already "in a manner," received Isaac from the dead; and the remembrance of this must have reassured him now. Isaac had been the fruit of "his own body," when "as good as dead," and had been presented to him, by the power of God, a living child from the dead womb of Sarah. (Romans iv. 19; Hebrews xi. 12.) And He who had made life once to proceed from death, was able to do so again, was able to resuscitate this child of promise from his ashes. But where, it may be asked, was the trial either to grace or to nature, if Abraham thus expected to receive his son again? This is the question of mere thoughtlessness. The victory of grace was being able, in such circumstances, to expect to receive him again. And besides, though grace was victorious in this trial, believing in the salvation of God, had nature nothing to endure, before this salvation could come? Was it no trial for the father, during the long journey from his home to Mount Moriah, to revolve in his mind the painful image of the death of his only son, a death by violence, and inflicted by his own hand? Was it no trial to command his feelings as he said to the servants, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Genesis xxii. 5), knowing as he did too well, what was to happen in the meantime? Was it no trial to build the altar, to lay the wood in order, to bind Isaac his son, to lay him on the altar, on the wood? Finally, was it no trial to stretch forth his hand, and take the knife to slay him, expecting in another moment to witness his convulsive struggles, and then to look on a heap of ashes as the

only remains of his child? So far from being no trial, these things were the crucifixion of nature; for faith, let us remember, took not away their bitterness, though it strengthened the sufferer to endure them. Nor did the Divine interposition take away that bitterness. It saved Abraham indeed from slaying his son in act, but he had previously endured in spirit all the anguish of doing so; the cup did not pass from him till he was drinking its very dregs. The last words of the text (if the meaning given to them in our version, which is the other rendering, be adopted) shew this in a very striking way. The patriarch had given up his son for dead, for when he received him again, it was a figurative resurrection,—it was receiving him as from his ashes. The joyful surprise of the one reception was as great as that of the other would have been, plainly shewing THE DEEP REALITY of the trial through which the parent had passed.

III. This brings us to the special consideration of the last words of the text. I believe on the whole, (though the point is not material) that our version is correct, and that these words set forth the reward of Abraham's faith rather than its nature. Let us read them therefore as they stand,—

From whence also he received him in a figure.

Faith has its suitable reward when it receives the expected blessing; and that blessing, in the Divine generosity, is always beyond our expectations. It

was thus with the patriarch on the present occasion. He expected a living son, a son restored from death: he received a living son, a son virtually restored from death; but he was spared the pain of slaying him. And this was by no means the extent of the Divine generosity: God returns with interest whatever is given to Him. Abraham had given Him his only son; the gift was returned, and was not returned empty. The same heavenly voice which stayed his hand from slaying him, conveyed the assurance that by what he had done, he had obtained the Divine approbation. Nor was the Lord content with this. He spake from heaven a second time, renewing all His former promises, confirming them also with an oath, and enlarging them exceedingly. There is something in this scene on Mount Moriah, which renders it more deeply interesting and affecting than perhaps any other circumstance recorded in Old-Testament Scripture. We may well turn aside and see this great sight. Almighty God is bending from the sky, to pour His blessing on His obedient servant's head; language is taxed to its utmost powers of expression, to convey to the object of His regard the fulness of His mercy, and the kind intentions of His gracious benignity; and yet we are conscious, as we read, that language is inadequate to the task; that this mercy, grace, and benignity CANNOT FIND EXPRESSION. Who shall conceive the feelings of Abraham, while thus addressed by Abraham's God! The anguish of the few preceding days, and all the trials of past years, would seem as nothing; I cannot remember them, he would exclaim,

for I serve One who values too highly and repays too amply my feeble efforts to please Him. (Genesis xxii. 12—18.)

But what meaning shall we annex to the words, "received him, in a figure"? Tyndale renders them, "he received him for an ensample;" the Rheims version has, "he received him also for a parable;" and the version of Cranmer, with greater distinctness than either, says that "he received him for an ensample of "the resurrection." For the virtual resurrection of Isaac was a shadowing forth of that mercy which has been, in all ages, the hope of the just; nay this whole transaction on Mount Moriah, was a parabolic representation of the mysteries of redeeming love. I believe, with these translators, that the Apostle meant to direct our attention to this, in the words which we are now considering. And even should this be set aside by the other rendering of the text being adopted, the truth of the figurative character of the transactions of Mount Moriah may be proved from other scriptures. Abraham was in the land of the Philistines when he received the command in question. If God's object then had simply been to put his faith and obedience to a trial, the appointed sacrifice might have taken place where he was sojourning. But instead of this, he was enjoined to proceed into Canaan, and to journey onwards in Canaan till he came to a certain locality; and there, he was told, a particular mountain would be pointed out as the scene of sacrifice. These injunctions were no slight addition to the patriarch's trial, for they greatly protracted its anguish; after he had

journeyed three days, he "lifted up his eyes," and the place was still "afar off." (Genesis xxi. 34; xxii. 1—4.) God therefore must have had a reason for them of the most important kind. Let us consider His dealings with David nine hundred years afterwards; they throw some light on this matter. We read that "the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel," that "there fell of Israel seventy thousand men," and that the destroying angel stayed his hand "by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." The angel immediately commanded David to rear up an altar in that threshing-floor; David obeyed, offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and the Lord declaring Himself pacified, commanded the angel to put up his sword into the sheath. The king's instant exclamation was, "this is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel." He accordingly made abundant preparation before his death, leaving it in charge to his son Solomon to build the house of God. (I Chronicles xxi. 14—30; xxii. 1—16.) And "Solomon began to build...at Jerusalem, in MOUNT MORIAH, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (II Chronicles iii. 1.) So that the very spot which God indicated to Abraham, as the scene of Isaac's sacrifice, was the spot on which he afterwards declared Himself pacified by sacrifice, which he indicated to David as the site of "burnt-offering for Israel," and on which sacrifices were offered till the coming, a thousand years afterwards, of that Lamb of God whom they prefigured.

Abraham said to his son, as they ascended that memorable hill, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a "burnt-offering," (Genesis xxii. 8,) and God fulfilled these unconsciously prophetic words, when Jesus died, as a sacrifice for sin, without the gates of Jerusalem,—the same locality, and not far from the same spot. It is impossible to put all these considerations together without coming to the conclusion that God had a special purpose in the command which He now gave to the patriarch. We have already seen that he and his sons came to the land of Canaan, because it was identified in their minds, with the hope of a Saviour to come; and St. Paul has expressly told us in the context, that they looked to it as the theatre of His glories. But they surely knew something also of His humiliation and sacrifice; and if Canaan was identified in their minds, with a Saviour coming to reign, it was surely identified also with a Saviour coming to die. The words of our Lord, "Abraham saw my day," cannot be restricted to the day of glory: their primary reference was to the day which Israel was then despising, i. e. his revelation as the lowly Son of man. And these words have a most striking and beautiful meaning, if it was indeed given to Abraham to discern this blessed mystery in what passed on Mount Moriah. His own paternal feelings would make him understand something of the love of God to man; he would have a glimpse, in the suppressed anguish of Isaac, of the grace of the willing Saviour; in Isaac virtually sacrificed, he would behold that Saviour slain; while in Isaac unbound and descending alive from the altar, he

would behold a foreshewing of victory over death, the victory of Jesus and that of His people after Him. In this parabolic instruction he would see Messiah's day; and the words of the text, I repeat, seem designed to tell us that he did so. It was an act of needless cruelty, says the infidel, to appoint to the patriarch this trial of obedience, when another would have sufficed as well. But by the view now presented, this objection is completely set aside. For the gladness with which this foreshewing of redemption would fill the heart of Abraham, would more than repay him for all his suffering and anguish, and to the end of his earthly pilgrimage he would return thanks to Him whose wisdom and love had appointed such a trial.

THERE was something peculiarly apposite to the circumstances of the Hebrews, in this part of the history of their father Abraham. Called as they then were to sacrifice all that was dear to them for Christ's sake, they were reminded that he, when commanded by God to do so, had resigned his son, his only one, his Isaac, his child of promise. Tempted, through the long continuance of persecution, to call in question the faithfulness of God and to think that He had forgotten to be gracious, they were reminded of the dark cloud of mystery in which their sainted father had been enveloped, when God seemed to forget all His promises and to retract in a moment the assurances of fifty years. Tempted to fear, as David did in the days of his affliction, that the rage of their enemies would swallow them up, they were reminded that

when Abraham had given up all hope, when there appeared no possibility of the life of Isaac being spared, God had provided for him, at the last moment, a ram instead of his son. The patriarch himself was so affected by this interposition, that he called the place "Jehovah Jireh," i.e. the Lord will provide. And it became, in reference to this transaction, a proverbial saying in Israel, "In the Mount the Lord shall be seen," i.e. in His people's extremity their God will appear. (Genesis xxii. 13, 14. Original Text. See Clarke and Henry.) Now the faith, St. Paul would say, which strengthened Abraham to make such a sacrifice, can strengthen you also; and if faith abide and be "found unto praise and honour," the issue of your trial shall be as glorious as was the issue of his. I furnish you therefore with an antidote against despair. Remember JEHOVAH JIREH; in your case, as in Abraham's, the extremity of man is the opportunity of the Lord.

And there are other lessons applicable to all ages of the Church, which may be learned from this solemn and mysterious transaction. It teaches us concerning God, concerning faith, concerning the Divine love to us and our duty to God in return.

Its figurative character teaches us concerning God. There was a father who had an only-begotten son, the joy and perpetual comfort of his heart. That son was delivered by his own hand to death, and was received alive into his paternal arms again. He of whom we speak, as we have already seen, was God; His son was Christ. Our sin "tried" the Almighty, proved the

feeling of His heart, the strength of His love to man. And "God so loved the world, that He gave His "only-begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) But here the type fails; no one interposed to save that Son from suffering, or to spare that Father's heart. Jesus was condemned, buffeted, scourged, spitted on; was led to crucifixion; was killed; was laid in the cold grave. And whilst these things were done, did the Father behold them unmoved? The living and eternal God is "without passions" (Article i.), but He is the fountain of tender, gracious, and affectionate feeling. He gave to Abraham his paternal heart; and in what Abraham's feelings must have been when he "took "the knife to slay his son," we read what passed through the bosom of the Father of heaven, when He beheld from His throne above, the Cross set up on Calvary. In that solemn and fearful hour (to speak after the manner of men) the Creator seemed to forget His creation. The sun went down at mid-day, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the earth heaved, and all nature forsook her course; for the heart of nature's God was moved within Him, the bowels of the Father were troubled for His Son. But this grief over His bruised child was transient, for He received Him again from the grave. We see this also shadowed forth in Abraham unbinding his living Isaac, and taking him down from the altar of burnt-offering. Who may describe his feelings as he did so! But the father's extatic joy in that moment of blessedness, was only a feeble type of the joy of the Father of Jesus on the morning of the third day. We learn this

from the memorable words with which He hailed His beloved One as He came forth from the tomb, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Acts xiii. 33.) I can call thee MINE NOW, He said, for I have rescued thee from the grasp of death, and thou shalt not be taken from me any more for ever.

The peculiar character of this trial of Abraham, teaches us concerning faith. He had believed words of God before this; but words were now contradictory, nay they were so, designedly, that he might confide in God Himself. Let us understand then that this is faith. Scripture contains the words of God; but it is not enough to believe that the contents of Scripture are true, we must confide in Him from whom they have proceeded. A man may be well-acquainted with the facts and propositions of Scripture; he may be learned in theology, as another is learned in medicine, and another, in astronomy. But such knowledge profits nothing. "When separated from God and His omnipotence, the propositions and demonstrations of theology become mere syllogisms or emblazonments; they can take their place under the dark shadow of the Atheism of the heart as well as the syllogisms or emblazonments of any other science." This eloquent language is, alas, too true, as the experience of every day attests; the learned theologian, the skilful physician, and the accomplished astronomer are often found equally far from God. How then shall this dark and deadly atheism be cured? By what is written concerning God in His word, when it reveals Him to us as a living person; One in whom we can confide, to

whom we can surrender our affections, whom we can rejoice to obey. Our fellow-creatures are no abstractions to us; we know our parents, our brothers and sisters, our kindred and friends as living persons; we speak with them, we share their counsels, we confide in their integrity and affection. And God must be no abstraction to us, we must know Him in the same manner. It was thus, as we have seen, that Abraham knew Him. His understanding was baffled by the apparent contradiction of His words, but he fell back on Himself in calm, affectionate confidence, and waited till He explained their meaning.

Abraham has left this lesson behind him, and there are seasons when it is felt to be invaluable. There are moments of agony when "conscience and the Bible seem to disagree." In such a case, what shall the Christian do? Shall he follow what appear to him the dictates of conscience and turn from the Bible? Such a course would lead him to infidelity. Or shall he sternly repress conscience with its questionings and refuse them any reply? Rude handling this for the delicate moral sense, and sure to issue in the blunting of its sensitiveness! Rather let him conclude that in the matter in question, he does not understand the Bible. And holding fast his confidence in Him from whom the Bible has proceeded, let him humbly wait for clearer light. Thus did his great father Abraham, and not in vain. Light and gladness came at last. Blessed encouragement for His believing children!

This subject gives us besides, encouragement to confide in God; we have the very same evidence of

the love of God to us, which God had of Abraham's love to Him. He has not withheld His Son, His only Son. (Genesis xxii. 12; John iii. 16.) This evidence satisfied God, and ought to satisfy us; to demand other evidence before we believe, is to refuse to trust the Almighty. And in what a striking light does this exhibit the duty which we owe to God! He did not pass by this proof of Abraham's affection; "Because thou hast done this thing," he said, "surely blessing I will bless thee." We ought not then to pass by this proof of His affection, but should "bless the Lord at all times," and have His praise continually in our mouths. Lives of devotedness should also prove the sincerity of our gratitude; constrained by His goodness we should be found living to His glory, and when doing all, we should still be asking, What shall we render to the Lord? Let us lay this to heart and learn these blessed lessons, lest God's recompense of Abraham be a witness against us in the judgment. Abraham shall testify in that day, that the Lord requited man's love, man's generous sacrifice for His name. And we shall find no refuge in which our guilt may hide itself if our lives have borne melancholy evidence that man requited not the love, the unspeakable gift of God. May He of His infinite mercy, grant that it be otherwise with us!

LECTURE IX.

FAITH'S PREDICTIONS IN ISAAC.

HEBREWS XI. 20.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

WE have been occupied, for the last four lectures, with the illustrations of faith which are afforded by the history of Abraham and his family. Another such illustration is now presented to us, in the history of the patriarch Isaac.

BY FAITH OF THINGS TO COME, *Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.*

A more apt illustration could not have been found ; a more profitable subject of meditation could not have been brought before us. It discovers in the first place, the true nature of faith : we find the patriarch, on the bed of age and infirmity, foretelling the history of generations, yea of nations then unborn. And it

proves, in the second place, the certain accomplishment of every thing in which faith believes: for if we consult history either sacred or profane, we shall find that the event has corresponded exactly with the prediction. Our attention is arrested, in the third place, by the amazing difference between the blessings bestowed on these brothers. And we are led, in the fourth place, to inquire into the reason of this difference. The subject will abundantly recompense our prayerful and attentive regard.

I. We read in the book of Genesis, that when Isaac was old, he sent for his two sons and blessed them. The circumstances connected with this act were very peculiar, but with them we have nothing at present to do; the exclusive objects of our attention are the blessings themselves. That of Jacob is mentioned first in the text, because it was first in order. "God "give thee" said his father Isaac, "of the dew of "heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of "corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations "bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and "let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be "every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that "blesseth thee." "God Almighty bless thee," he again said, "and make thee fruitful, and multiply "thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and "give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to "thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the "land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave "unto Abraham." (Genesis xxvii. 26—29; xxviii.

3, 4.) The blessing of Esau comes next in order. "Behold, thy dwelling," said his father, "shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." (Genesis xxvii. 39, 40.) In pronouncing these words over the heads of his two sons, Isaac declared that they should be the fathers of great, powerful, and warlike nations, and that the countries inhabited by them should be distinguished by fertility and abundance. He declared that the seed of Jacob should be multiplied exceedingly and should inherit Canaan, that they should rule over all the nations round and more especially over the seed of Esau; that they should be the blessed nation, the object of God's peculiar regard. He declared concerning the seed of Esau, that though they should serve the children of Jacob, it should be only for a time; that dominion should one day return to them, and that when that day arrived, they should break from off their necks the hated fraternal yoke. The text tells us that the patriarch declared all this "by faith of things to come." Such faith was indeed, according to the Apostle's definition, "the evidence of things not seen." Surely Isaac, from his bed of age and infirmity, did not see the thousands of Israel dwelling in the land of Canaan as the favoured people of the Lord; did not see the victories of David and the subjugation of the Edomites; did not see the reign of Solomon. Surely he did not see the Edomites

dwelling in Mount Seir and living by their swords, neither did he see their successful revolt against Israel. No; but God saw it all, and shewed it to His servant. And Isaac, having faith in God, took the Divine word as his evidence that it should surely come to pass.

II. And it did come to pass. The patriarch exclaimed before blessing Jacob, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed;" and this assurance of the peculiar Divine favour which was to attend him and his, was afterwards, as we have seen, confirmed in the blessing itself. Now we have only to trace the history of Jacob, and of the family and nation which proceeded from him, from the time that these words were pronounced to the present hour, to be convinced of their complete accomplishment. Nothing but the Divine blessing preserved him on his way to Haran, and brought him safe back again, through the snares and dangers that beset his path. (Genesis *xxxi.* 29; *xxxii.* *xxxiii.*) Nothing else preserved his family from the vengeance of the Canaanites, when his sons had perfidiously slain the men of Shechem. (Genesis *xxxiv.* 30; *xxxv.* 5.) Nothing else provided for him and for his house an asylum in Egypt, in the time of the grievous famine; caused them to multiply there into a great nation, and at last brought them up again notwithstanding the wrath of Pharaoh; cast out the Canaanite before them, and settled them in that land of promise. Their settlement there was also a fulfil-

ment of another of the words of Isaac. And while they dwelt there, they were indeed "the seed of the "blessed of the Lord" (Isaiah lxv. 23), as no people had been before them; neither shall there be any after them. They "were many," being a people, as we have already seen, like "the sand of the sea," like "the dust of the earth," like "the stars of the sky "in multitude." And this was but a small thing; they had God dwelling in the midst of them as their lawgiver, judge, and king; they had His holy oracle for their guidance in perplexity, they had His mighty arm for their refuge in danger. Nor did even this exhaust their blessing. When the lapse of ages brought about at last the accomplishment of the purposes of God, of them "as concerning the flesh, Christ "came" (Romans ix. 5); Jehovah took flesh of Judah's daughter, and revealed Himself as "Immanuel, "God with us." (Isaiah vii. 14; Matthew i. 23.) They knew Him not indeed, and crucified Him in their blindness; and for that offence they have been scattered among all the nations of the earth. But the Divine blessing has attended them in their wanderings, and still continues to attend them. For the last two thousand years, though found in every land, they have been preserved a distinct people; yea they are so at this moment, kept in the Divine faithfulness for mercy yet in store.

But the blessing bestowed on Jacob was more special and particular; it spoke of "the dew of "heaven," of "the fatness of the earth," and of "plenty of corn and wine." And these words were

fulfilled in the fertility of the land of promise as all history bears witness. It spoke also of "people" and "nations" serving Jacob's children; yea, it gave to him, in the persons of his descendants, lordship over his brethren and his mother's sons. And these words were fulfilled when the kingdom of Israel was set up. "Many people and strong nations" bowed down then to the seed of Jacob. David overthrew the Philistines, with the Ammonites, Moabites, and Syrians, and reduced under his royal sway his enemies on every side. The dominion of his son Solomon was a still further fulfilment of them. For "Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt:...he had dominion over all the kings: and he had peace on all sides round about him:...they brought presents, and served him all the days of his life." (I Kings iv. 24.) Nor was it aliens only who submitted themselves; Jacob's mother's sons, the children of Esau, were overthrown and reduced into subjection by the victorious arm of David. "He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants." (II Samuel viii. 14.) And while part of this blessing was thus fulfilled in the subjection of some nations, part of it was fulfilled in the total destruction of others. It pronounced a curse on every one who should curse his seed, and a blessing on those who should bless them. Egypt once blessed them, and God has not forgotten it: Egypt is still a nation, and the days are coming in which the Lord shall say, "Blessed be Egypt my people."

(Isaiah xix. 25.) But let us look at the fate of Amalek. Her people fought with Israel in Rephidim, as they came forth from Egypt; and the Lord swore on that day that He would "utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (Exodus xvii. 8—16.) This purpose was confirmed by His word in the mouth of Balaam. "Amalek was the first of the nations," He said; "but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever." (Numbers xxiv. 20.) It was confirmed in the mouth of Moses also. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way," was his charge to Israel; "thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." (Deuteronomy xxv. 17—19.) It began to be accomplished by Saul who smote Amalek "from Havilah to Shur" (I Samuel xv. 1—7); and it was still further accomplished by David, after whose days the name of Amalek ceases to appear among the nations. Let us look also at the fate of another of Israel's enemies. Babylon was her prison-house, the most cruel, implacable, and relentless of her oppressors. "None shall remain in it," was the Lord's word of recompense, "neither man nor beast,...it shall be desolate for ever." (Jeremiah li. 62.) And this word has been accomplished; Babylon the magnificent, affords now not even a miserable shelter in which the Arab may fold his flock. Her ruins attest at this hour the truth of God, and remind us of the certain fulfilment of every thing in which faith believes; bid us look back four thousand years and remember the words of Isaac, "Cursed be every one that curseth thee."

And the blessing of Esau has had its fulfilment also. It spoke of "the fatness of the earth," and of "the dew of heaven;" and profane history bears abundant witness to the fertility of the land of Edom. It spoke of the Edomites living by their swords; and all history testifies to the warlike character of that people. But warlike as they were, the yoke was to be upon their necks; they were to serve the seed of Jacob. And it was so, as we have already seen: they were subdued by David, and continued in subjection for nearly two hundred years. At the end of that time they "revolted, and made a king over themselves." Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, who then reigned in Judah, attempted to reconquer them; but the blessing of Isaac was too powerful for him. The aged patriarch had said to Esau, "It shall come to pass that when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." And it did come to pass accordingly. Notwithstanding Jehoram's partial success "Edom," as we are told by the inspired historian, "revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day." (II Kings viii. 20—22.) The blessing bestowed on the father of the Edomites, has therefore failed in nothing, but has been in every point fulfilled.

III. Let us next observe the vast, the amazing difference between the blessings bestowed on these brothers. It does not appear at first sight, but a careful comparison reveals it in a most striking way. The name of the God of blessing is not even mentioned in that which was given to Esau. The fatness of the

earth and the dew of heaven are promised ; ability and strength for war are also promised : but these are not said to come from God, or to be bestowed on the receiver as marks of Divine favour. The blessing is wholly earthly. And being earthly, it is also temporary ; it is bounded by the present world, and there is nothing in it which reaches into eternity. How very different is the blessing bestowed on Jacob ! To him, as to his brother, the dew of heaven and fatness of the earth are promised, with ability and strength for war ; but these mercies are in his case, expressly said to come from God, yea to be the fruit of Divine favour. " God " give " them to thee, is the language of the inspired patriarch ; for " the smell of my son is as the smell of a " field which the Lord hath blessed." This appears in a still more striking manner, in the concluding words of the blessing. The Divine denunciation, " Cursed " be every one that curseth thee," was a declaration on God's part, of enmity to Jacob's enemies ; whilst the precious benediction, " Blessed be he that blesseth thee," declared him the friend of Jacob's friends ; for God only can curse, God only is able to bless. He was the friend of Jacob himself then, and the God also. The prophetic words of Isaac, understood in this their obvious import, conveyed thus to Jacob the heirship of Abraham's promises, declaring beforehand the name afterwards announced at the bush, " The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Exodus iii. 6.) The blessing of Jacob therefore is eminently and essentially spiritual ; assuring its object of the favour and love of the Most High. And being

spiritual, it is also eternal ; he who is possessed of this love and favour, is possessed of eternal life. This point requires no further elucidation ; attention has already been drawn to the gracious Divine declaration that "the God of Jacob" is His name FOR EVER. One of these brothers had in this way the creature for his portion, whilst the other had the Lord ; one had time, whilst the other had eternity. "Was not Esau Jacob's "brother?" is His question to Israel by Malachi : "yet "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." (Malachi, i. 2, 3.)

The history of their descendants, exemplifies the same contrast. The seed of Esau were a great and warlike people, inhabiting a fertile and well-watered country. But so far from knowing or fearing the God of their father Abraham, they sank into heathen darkness, and continued a nation of brutish idolaters, after His worship had been for ages, set up in the land of Israel. Their history is thus a practical illustration of the worldly character of their father's blessing ; Abraham's God was not the God of Edom. It is an illustration also of its temporary character. Where is it now ? Where is now the fatness of Mount Seir, the goodly land of Edom ? It is alas, a barren wilderness, a waste of sand. And where are now those valiant Edomites who lived by their swords in the days of their nation's glory, and brake Israel's yoke from off their necks ? They are gone from the face of the earth ; Edom is no more a nation. Esau's blessing has thus RUN OUT ; the last sands of it are numbered. Let us compare with this, the history of the descend-

ants of Jacob. God, as we have already seen, took them as His peculiar people, revealed His name to them, set up His worship in the midst of them, and bestowed on them His living oracles. Of them came patriarchs, saints, and prophets; of them came the Messiah; of them came the twelve apostles, the instructors of mankind. They have also been honoured to present to all nations the blessed word of life: there is not a word of holy Scripture which is not the writing of a Hebrew, or of a proselyte of the God of the Hebrews. And their blessing is as enduring as it is precious. Many generations have passed since the name of Edom was forgotten; but the name of Israel is still remembered, and shall be to the end of time. He who revealed Himself at the bush, declared that "the God of Jacob" was His "memorial to all generations;" and every past generation attests the faithfulness of His word. The present generation attests it also; and future generations shall attest it more abundantly. For the word of the Lord in the mouth of Jeremiah, shall assuredly be yet accomplished: God shall gather Israel again, and plant them in their own land with His whole heart and His whole soul. (Jeremiah xxxii. 41.) We have witnessed the accomplishment of the word of St. Paul, for their off-casting has proved "the reconciling of the world;" and we shall as surely witness the accomplishment of the kindred assurance, that the receiving of them again shall be "life from the dead." (Romans xi. 15.) They shall be God's ministers of salvation to mankind, and in them and in their seed, while sun and moon endure,

“shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis xii. 3.) The same blessing which preserves them a distinct people now, shall prevail to do these things for them. And that blessing shall never RUN OUT, its sands shall never be numbered.

IV. Let us now inquire into the reason of this difference. Esau was the elder of these two sons of Isaac, and yet the name of Jacob is mentioned first in the text. And this is not by chance; the Apostle would remind us that the younger stepped into the elder's place. Now there must have been a cause for this: God puts down no man from his place without a reason. Sin was the cause of it. The blessing which Jacob obtained, was Esau's birthright, for it was Abraham's blessing and belonged to his elder grandson. And had it not been for that grandson's profane contempt of it, the name at the bush should have been, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Esau.” St. Paul declares this in express terms. He exhorts the Hebrews, as we shall afterwards see more fully, not to follow the example of that “profane person, Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.” He reminds them also that for this offence “he was rejected afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing;” and that he was not able to turn aside the wrath or alter the purpose of God. (Hebrews xii. 16, 17.) And the book of Genesis, in these particulars, entirely confirms the Apostle. It tells us that Esau came faint from his hunting, and begged some pottage from Jacob. Jacob made the

birthright the price of the pottage; and Esau, exclaiming with the profaneness of unbelief, "What good shall this birthright do to me?" accepted Jacob's terms, and sold the precious treasure. The time came round, it further tells us, when the brothers should receive their blessings; and God took away the birthright-blessing from him who had thus despised it. What renders this much more striking, is that Isaac was not at the first aware of the Divine purpose, and blessed Jacob, mistaking him for Esau. But He whose inspiration guided his words taught him to acquiesce in His righteous dealing; for when he afterwards blessed Esau, knowing who stood before him, he omitted, and I believe through intention, the very name of God. It really appears as if God had said to him, Give thy son what he cares for, let him have worldly good, and in abundance; but do not assure him of my favour, do not speak to him of my mercy, do not pledge me to be a God to him, for these things he has cast away. Righteous Abraham's mercy thus alighted on the head of Jacob: he to whom it pertained, had proved unworthy, and it sought another object. (Genesis xxv. 29—34; xxvii.) Was Jacob then the worthier of the two? His conduct in the matter of the birthright and in afterwards deceiving his father, will not permit us to say so. But God was pleased to meet with him on his way to Haran, to reveal His goodness to him and to touch his heart. And whatever had been the character of the preceding years of his life, he sought God's face from that hour, and became His devoted servant. (Genesis xxviii. 10—22.)

For while unhappy, thoughtless Esau lived and died a worldling, Jacob, as we have already seen, waited for the salvation of God. These things duly considered, account most satisfactorily for the difference of their blessings. The worldling received the worldly and temporary blessing: he whom God afterwards taught to value it, received that which was spiritual and eternal.

THIS reference to the history of their fathers Isaac and Jacob, was fitted to teach the Hebrews some most important lessons. They could not call to mind their own experience as a people, or that of their kindred the Edomites, and connect them with the scene in the family of Isaac to which the Apostle here refers, without being convinced of the certain accomplishment of everything in which faith believes. And to those who, by reason of long-continued trials of faith, were tempted to distrust God, such a lesson was invaluable. They could not call to mind the rejection of Esau, without being convinced that all were not children who were of Abraham; for Esau also was of Abraham. And they were thus warned to take heed, lest though themselves of Abraham, they also should come short of Abraham's blessing. Finally, they knew enough of Esau's history, to be aware that through preference of a present world, he had lost the blessing of the Lord. And tempted as they then were to forsake Christ and His salvation, the remembrance of that unhappy worldling must have been a salutary beacon on the one hand, whilst that of their father Jacob furnished them with a pattern on the other.

It is needless to add that these lessons are all for us. Happy indeed is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God! Our breath goes forth, and we return to our earth; but to those who trust in Him, He "keepeth truth for ever." (Psalms cxlvi. 4—6.) It is nearly four thousand years since Isaac returned to his earth, but the words in which he believed, have been fulfilled, and are at this moment receiving their fulfilment. And the experience of the humblest believer in the blessed gospel, is and shall be in all respects the same. Ages may have rolled over the world since he departed from it, his humble tomb may be forgotten, his very name and history may have perished from among men. But he is not forgotten before God; he has rich and blessed experience of the truth of every word in which he was caused to hope during his sojourn here below. For "all flesh is grass...the grass withereth... "but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And "this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (I Peter i. 24, 25.) He who makes that gospel his hope, chooses the blessing of Jacob; he who turns to something else, casts in his lot with Esau. We have already seen that Esau's blessing was worldly: it promised the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven, but nothing more. Jacob's blessing is better than, even now. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," says the Psalmist, "more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Psalms iv. 7.) We have seen also the temporary character of Esau's blessing; but Jacob's lasts for ever. "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple

“and fine linen...and there was a certain beggar...laid
 “at his gate.” “It came to pass that the beggar
 “died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s
 “bosom;” and so with his death his eternal enjoyments
 begun. “The rich man also died, and was buried;”
 and with his death and burial his enjoyments ended.
 He who had “fared sumptuously every day,” and the
 crumbs of whose table had been an object of desire,
 implored then a drop of water. But he implored it in
 vain; “Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst
 “thy good things,” was his stern answer from on high.
 (Luke xvi. 19—25.) Esau might have had the better
 blessing, nay it was his, but he sold it for a morsel of
 meat. And the case is the same still. The fatherly
 love and forgiving mercy of God in which Jacob’s
 blessing consisted, were sealed as ours in baptism, and
 shall be ours for ever, unless we sell our part in Christ.
 Satan would fain have us to sell it, and offers us the
 world instead. And if we take his offer, we do sell
 it: for we cannot have both; we “cannot serve God
 “and mammon.” (Luke xvi. 13.) The mercy and
 grace of the baptismal covenant shall not save us if
 we do so; the profaneness of Esau was not forgiven,
 though Esau was of Abraham. The temptation before
 which he fell, resembles that which is now presented
 to us; the world at its best estate, is after all, only
 morsel of meat. And when he who has had no other
 portion, awakes in eternity and finds himself sur-
 rounded by its awful and enduring realities, “
 “shall be,” in the striking language of the prophet,
 “as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he

"eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." (Isaiah xxix. 8.) For we only dream that we have found happiness, when we are living without God. Oh delusive dream! Oh fearful awaking! For when we awake, alas, we shall dream no more. The history of these brothers then impresses on us the counsel of St. Paul; bids us seek those things which are above, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and set our "affection on things above," and "not on things on the earth." (Colossians iii. 1, 2.) Following this counsel and looking with Jacob for God's salvation, we shall be privileged, when this world is no more, to behold the Saviour's face in righteousness; yea we shall be satisfied, when we awake, with His likeness. (Psalms xvii. 15.) May God, in His infinite goodness, grant this grace to us all!

LECTURE X.

FAITH'S CONFIDENCE IN JACOB AND JOSEPH.

HEBREWS XI. 21, 22.

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”

THE Apostle has not yet done with the inexhaustible history of those patriarchs whose God the Almighty was not ashamed to be called. Not satisfied with a general reference to Isaac and Jacob in connection with their father Abraham, he referred, as we saw in the last lecture, to the faith of Isaac specially, and in the first of the verses which we have now read, he refers as particularly to the faith of Jacob. With Jacob he associates, in the second verse, the most honoured of his sons; that son who, in reward of righteousness, received the first-born's blessing; the favoured patriarch Joseph. His reference to Isaac,

introduced us to that servant of God on the bed of age and infirmity; his present reference to Jacob and Joseph, introduces us to them on the bed of death. It was with these patriarchs, as moralists tell us is the case with mankind in general. "The ruling passion" was "strong in death;" when heart and flesh were failing, faith discovered undecaying energy, they proclaimed God to be the strength of their heart, and declared Him to be their portion for ever. (Psalms lxxiii. 26.)

As we examine in detail these references to Old-Testament history, we shall find them most instructive. They furnish another example of the true nature of faith, and another proof of the certain accomplishment of everything in which faith believes. And besides this, the former of them shews in a most striking way, what God esteems to be a blessing, and reveals to us at the same time, His sovereignty in His dealings with men. We shall take these points in order.

I. St. Paul tells us that "by faith, Jacob, when "he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph." And in conformity with this, we read in the book of Genesis, that Joseph took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to visit their dying grandsire, and that Jacob blessed them. He adopted them as his own sons, declaring that like Reuben and Simeon, they should be heads of tribes in Israel; he also associated with him in this act of adoption, his fathers Abraham and Isaac. He pronounced on them besides, the benediction of abundant increase, declaring that they

should "grow into a multitude in the midst of the "earth," and that it should pass into a proverb, "God "make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." But there was a peculiar character attached to this blessing: it was unequal. He "stretched out his right "hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the "younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head." And he did this by intention, for when admonished of it by his son Joseph, and requested to alter it, he refused, saying of his elder grandson, "He also shall "become a people, and he also shall be great, but "truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, "and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." (Genesis xlviii. 1—20.) This language and behaviour on the part of the patriarch, discovers the true nature of faith. His whole family amounted at that time to about an hundred persons, and ages were to intervene before that family could increase into a nation, and that nation could be divided into tribes. Jacob had returned to his native dust long before these things happened; and it is therefore superfluous to remark that he did not see them on his dying bed. But God who sees the end from the beginning, revealed them to His servant; and Jacob believing God, recognized in the youths who knelt before him, the fathers of "the ten thousands of Ephraim," and of "the thousands of Manasseh." (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 17.)

St. Paul also mentions, in the former verse of the text, that the dying patriarch "worshipped, leaning "upon the top of his staff." We have an account of this circumstance in the book of Genesis. The in-

spired historian has recorded, that when "the time drew nigh that Israel must die, he called his son "Joseph," and solemnly charged him not to bury him in Egypt, but with his fathers in the land of Canaan. The dutiful and believing son at once acceded to the dying father's request. But Jacob was not satisfied: "Swear unto me," he said, "and Joseph sware to him." We come then to the reference of the Apostle. Having received his son's adjuration, "Israel," as our translation renders it, "bowed himself upon the bed's head;" or, as the Septuagint version renders it, "worshipped upon the top of his staff." St. Paul, who always quotes from the Septuagint, has followed it on this occasion also; but this variation between it and our translation of the Hebrew, is a matter of no importance. If aged Israel was able to sit up during this interview, he would lean on his staff for support; if he was lying in bed, he would raise himself on his pillow at the head of it, that he might converse with his son. The point of importance in the Apostle's reference, is that he engaged then in an act of worship, expressive of his faith in God. And this appears in both renderings. For the expression "bowed himself," is strictly equivalent to "worshipped." When king David was dying, his people said, "God make the name of Solomon better than thy name;" and "the king bowed himself upon the bed, and said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." (I Kings i. 47, 48.) We have already seen that this act of worship on the part of Jacob, was immediately subsequent to the promise and oath of his son to bury him in the land of

Canaan. Most men desire to be laid beside their fathers after death: it is inherent in human nature. And hence, in all ages and among all nations, we read of family-sepulchres, from the splendid mausoleum of royalty to the humble burying-place of the peasant. But it was a very different and much higher feeling which prompted the desire of Jacob to be buried in Canaan. The cave of Machpelah in which he wished his bones to be laid, was no mere family burying-place. Both Ishmael and Esau were of Abraham's family; but we do not read that either they or their children were buried there. A higher character belonged to it: it was the grave of faith, the burying-place of believing men and women. "There," says the dying patriarch, "they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." (Genesis xlix. 31.) St. Paul has told us that these worthies "died in faith;" and we may add, that they were buried in faith. For God had sworn to give that land to their seed for an everlasting possession, and they desired their bones to be laid in it, in testimony that they believed His word. God had also sworn to be Abraham's God for ever, and to bless through him and with his blessing, the whole company of the saved. And those of Abraham's family who believed God's word, desired therefore to lie down beside that father of blessing; it was an expression of their faith that they should rise and inherit with him at last. The mind of Jacob was evidently exercised in this way, when he made the request which we are now considering. If he had merely wished to

buried in the family sepulchre, he would not have used language of such urgency, nor exacted an oath after receiving a solemn promise, nor bowed his head in worship after this assurance had been given. But the view which has just been presented, explains both the urgency and his worship. It was the worship at once of thanksgiving and of faith. He was pouring forth his acknowledgments, as he bowed his head, to Him who had put it into the heart of Joseph to comply with his dying wish; he was laying hold afresh of every word of blessing which God had spoken to Abraham, and in connection with the land of promise; he was calling God for a record upon his soul, that insured expectation of the fulfilment of them all, he eluded up the ghost.

There is one circumstance connected with the death of Jacob, which demonstrates in a most striking manner, the truth of these remarks. He said to Joseph just after blessing his sons, "God shall...bring you again unto the land of your fathers." And faith in God imparted to this expectation in the mind of the patriarch, the distinct character of certain reality; for he added immediately, "I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." (Genesis xlviii. 21, 22.) There never certainly was a more singular bequest, if we consider the circumstances of the testator. He had bought the parcel of ground referred to, from Hamor the king of Shechem, and had built on it an altar to the Lord. (Genesis xxxiii. 19, 20.) And when the Amorite had

dispossessed him, most probably after the murder of the Shechemites by his family, he had recovered it by the sword. Joseph had nothing to do with that perfidious murder, and was entitled, as having now the place of the first-born, to a portion above his brethren; and to him therefore it was bequeathed by his dying father. But how was the bequest to take effect? Seventeen years had elapsed since the patriarch had left Canaan; and the original owner had doubtless repossessed himself of the property. Jacob's family were also then multiplying in Egypt, and there was no probability, for ages to come, of their claiming their rights in Canaan. But the mind of the patriarch was not troubled by such difficulties; he bequeathed it to Joseph and his heirs, as if it had been his to give. Nothing but that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen" will for a moment, explain such an act, or redeem it from the imputation of insensate folly. An illustration from Roman history will bring its true character before us. It has often been referred to, as a most singular demonstration of the confidence of that wondrous people in the prowess of their own right arm, that even after the disastrous day of Cannae, when Hannibal was thundering at their gates, the very ground on which the Carthaginian army stood, was sold in the Roman market. For though the flower of her warriors had fallen in that fatal defeat, though one of her consuls and nearly an hundred of her senators lay dead upon the field, both buyer and seller knew that that ground should be Rome's

again. The case which we are now considering is an example of the same confidence; not of confidence in ourselves indeed, but of confidence in the Lord. Jacob dying in Egypt, and far from the land of Canaan, leaves to the family of Joseph a parcel of ground, then in possession of the Canaanite. For God had said that He would bring up his seed from Egypt, and bestow on them that land as their inheritance; and Jacob believed God.

St. Paul's reference to the history of Joseph displays the true nature of faith in an equally striking manner. "By faith Joseph, when he died," he tells us, "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." The book of Genesis again confirms the Apostle, and explains more particularly to what this faith had reference. "God will surely visit you" he said, "and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." For though Joseph was surrounded with the pomp and glory of Egypt, his heart was where the hearts of his fathers had been; he looked to Canaan, he clung to the promises of Abraham's God. One of his last acts accordingly was that referred to in the text. Following the example of his father Jacob, he "took an oath of the children of Israel saying...ye shall carry up my bones from hence." (Genesis l. 24, 25.) He was influenced in doing this, doubtless by the same motive. He desired to leave a testimony behind him of his assured expectation of the fulfilment of the words of the Lord, and to call God and man to wit-

ness that in that assured expectation he yielded up the ghost. Now it is impossible not to observe in all this the true nature of faith. If at the period of Jacob's death there was little probability, to judge from appearances, that his children would come forth from Egypt and make good their way to Canaan, there was still less at the death of Joseph. They had begun then to multiply into a nation, and Egypt was filled with them; they had become wedded to its soil and attached to it as their country; they had also learned its religion and become contaminated with its idolatries. Every thing had thus conspired to make them forget that they were Abraham's seed, and cease to look for the fulfilment of the promises of God to their fathers. It was not possible for human wisdom to foresee by what combination of circumstances God would sever these bonds, and lead His people forth that they might possess their promised heritage. But God had said that He would do so, and this was enough for Joseph. He took God's word as his evidence of what it was not given to him to see; and left behind him, in token that he did so, the charge and adjuration of the text.

II. Let us now direct our attention to the fulfilment on God's part, of those good words in which these His servants had trusted. We shall begin with the blessing bestowed on the sons of Joseph. Ephraim and Manasseh became, according to that blessing, heads of tribes in Israel. And what makes this fulfilment of God's word more remarkable, is that one cir-

cumstance seemed to render that fulfilment impossible. Jacob had twelve sons, and there were to be twelve tribes in Israel. In what way then could Joseph become the father of two tribes without deranging the order and harmony of the chosen nation? Nothing however which God has promised shall prove impossible of accomplishment. By an express ordinance not revealed till the days of Moses, provision was made for the fulfilment of Israel's dying words; for Levi was forbidden to be numbered among the tribes (Numbers i. 47—54), and room was thus made for the double tribe of Joseph, for Ephraim and for Manasseh. The benediction of singular increase was also accomplished on them, for they did grow into a multitude. And the inequality of this benediction appeared in their history; for while both were great and numerous, Ephraim the younger was the more numerous and the greater of the two. These fulfilments of the word of the Lord were apparent as early as the days of Moses; even he tells us of "the ten thousands of Ephraim" and of "the thousands of Manasseh." (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 17.) Let us next observe the fulfilment of the promises in reference to Canaan, in which these sainted patriarchs had believed. We have already noticed the difficulties which lay in the way of this fulfilment; the small number of Israel at the period of the death of Jacob, and their entanglement with Egyptian idolatries before the death of Joseph. But God knew how to remove these difficulties and to burst these bonds. Israel, before Joseph's death, had begun to multiply into a nation; and very soon after that event He raised

up a new king over Egypt, and permitted him and his people to oppress and afflict them exceedingly. Egyptian cruelty thus made that land bitter in which they were too ready to have found a home, and was at the same time, God's rod of chastening to them for having served Egyptian idols. This severe discipline moreover was continued, till in their extremity they sought the God of their fathers. And when they sought Him, He was entreated of them. "Their cry came up unto God;" He "remembered His covenant," and came down to deliver them. (Exodus ii. 23—25; iii. 1—6.) Moses and Aaron were His selected instruments; and after Egypt had been nearly destroyed by their ministry of vengeance, Israel was brought out of it with an high hand. And He who had begun, went on to remember His covenant. He guided them through the wilderness by His miraculous presence, feeding them with manna for forty years; He cast out the Canaanite before them, and divided among their tribes that goodly land of promise. In the believing foresight of these things, Joseph, as we have seen already, had given charge concerning his bones. And that charge was not forgotten. On that memorable night in which "the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt," "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." (Exodus xii. 41; xiii. 19.) And let us not stop here; if we desire to see the certain accomplishment of every thing in which faith believes, let us follow these hallowed bones to their final resting-place. They were preserved by the pious care of Moses for forty years in

the wilderness, and when Joshua had put Israel in possession of the promised land, they were buried "in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem...and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." (Joshua xxiv. 32.) This was the parcel of ground of which mention has been made already; which Jacob bought originally from the Amorite; of which, when unjustly deprived of it, he repossessed himself by his sword and bow; which he bequeathed to Joseph and his family, on his dying bed. Let us give glory to God for His faithfulness; let us observe how entirely He justifies the confidence which is reposed on Him. That day did come for which dying Jacob had looked; Canaan was given to his seed for their inheritance; **THAT VERY PARCEL OF GROUND BECAME THE INHERITANCE OF THE CHILDREN OF JOSEPH; IN THAT VERY PARCEL OF GROUND JOSEPH'S BONES WERE BURIED.** Let us not be afraid then to confide in the tried truth of the Blessed One. Nothing which proceeds out of His mouth, be it great or small, ever fails of accomplishment; all comes to pass.

III. We learn also from this subject what God esteems to be a blessing. Jacob is said in the text to have blessed the sons of Joseph; and the chief element in this blessing, as we have seen already, was their adoption into his family. But whether adoption is or is not a blessing, depends on the circumstances of the case. If a rich man is pleased to adopt the son of a poor man to share the fortunes of his children, we

esteem it to be so; but we should account it no blessing to the son of a rich man to be adopted into the family and to share the fortunes of the poor. This however was the case on the occasion referred to in the text. The father of Manasseh and Ephraim was lord of Egypt, and only Pharaoh in the throne was greater than he. As far therefore as wealth and rank were concerned, his sons could not have occupied a more exalted position, unless they had been sons to the king. Their grandfather was in comparison, a poor man, possessed of neither rank nor greatness; and his sons had no higher place in Egypt than that of Pharaoh's herdsman! And yet when Jacob transplanted them from the family of their honoured and wealthy father, adopting them into his own ignoble house, and giving them rank with Reuben and Simeon, St. Paul says that he blessed them. It remains a question whether the youths themselves were of this mind. If they valued themselves on being the sons of Joseph, and desired to forget their Hebrew extraction and to acquire Egyptian honours, they certainly would not esteem the patriarch's act a blessing. For the very name of Hebrew was held in abomination in Egypt (Genesis xliii. 32); and in as far therefore as that act took effect during their lifetime, it would bar their way to coveted distinction and glory. But perhaps they were of one mind with their godly father, and were turning their eyes from Egyptian grandeur to the promises of the God of Abraham. They would esteem, in that case, anything to be a blessing which brought them, at whatever worldly sacrifice, even one

step nearer to the heirship of these promises; and would know how to prize the privilege conferred on them, when they were adopted as the sons of Jacob. And whatever was their mind, we see the mind of God.

IV. We learn yet another lesson from this subject: the inequality of their blessings demonstrates the sovereignty of God. I enter on the consideration of this truth with the more willingness, because of all the doctrines of our holy faith it has been the most misrepresented and abused. Some theologians really speak as if the Divine sovereignty were the privilege of doing evil to men without a cause, and of destroying them by an arbitrary decree. Scripture represents it simply as the right of the Sovereign of the universe to distribute His favours as He will, and places side by side with it, that eternal justice which forbids Him to bring evil on any, except as the reward of their sin. His dealings with Abraham and his immediate descendants, are a most signal demonstration of these eternal principles of His government. Let us look at His dealings with Ishmael and Isaac in the family of Abraham, and with Esau and Jacob in the family of Isaac; let us look also at His dealing in the case before us, with Manasseh and Ephraim in the family of Joseph. No offence is charged against Manasseh, nor is any reason assigned why his younger brother was promoted over his head. God was pleased, in sovereignty, to distribute His favours as He did. Neither Manasseh nor Ephraim had any claim on

Him; and when there is no claim, there can be no complaint. But let it be most carefully observed that both these brothers were blessed; Manasseh received indeed the smaller blessing, but still it was a blessing. The same remark is applicable to the case of Ishmael. When God appeared to Abraham and foretold the birth of Isaac, the patriarch entreated that Ishmael the son whom he already had, might rather live before him. The request was denied indeed, but let us observe the terms of the denial. "As for Ishmael," said the Lord, "I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly...but my covenant will I establish with Isaac." (Genesis xvii. 20, 21.) Here are two distinct blessings, a larger and a smaller; and the larger blessing is bestowed on the younger son. It was so, because God is a Sovereign and distributes His favours as He will: neither Ishmael nor Isaac had any claim on His bounty; and when no claim can be advanced, no complaint can be justly preferred. The case of Esau is an illustration of the other principle, and differs essentially from those which we have just considered. The birthright-blessing belonged to Esau, as the elder son of him in whom the seed was to be called, and he could not have lost it without wilful sin. And though for his father's sake, he received worldly good from God's hand, it was unaccompanied by any blessing, he was rejected and cursed. The Divine declaration concerning him, is of the most awful character, "Esau have I hated." These words alone fully demonstrate the truth of the remark which

has just been made; for God nowhere declares that He hated either Manasseh or Ishmael. They received a smaller blessing; but Esau the seller of his birthright, received a positive curse. God gave to them, in sovereignty, the portion which seemed good in His eyes; but He rejected, in awful righteousness, the man who had rejected Him, and has left His name and history as a beacon for all generations.

The dealings of God both in providence and grace, confirm these views of His character. If we open our eyes and look around, we cannot fail to observe how unequally, as it appears to us, He has distributed His mercies. Let us look at the difference among nations. The inhabitants of one country enjoy the blessings of civilization and liberty; the inhabitants of another are born, live, and die in miserable barbarism and slavery. Or let us narrow our circle of observation and look at the difference among ourselves. One is born to opulence and ease, another to poverty and toil; one is blessed with health, with a family, and with friends, another spends his life without any of these comforts to cheer it. Let us look at the still greater difference in men's religious condition, and in their opportunities of spiritual improvement. One is born in a land of gospel-light and ordinances; another is born, lives, and dies in a land of heathen darkness. And even among ourselves in this land of Christian light and knowledge, one is the child of parents who teach him early to fear the Lord; another never hears the voice of parental instruction, nor has any example of righteousness or truth set before him. We can ascribe

these manifold and obvious differences in men's lot, to nothing but the sovereign pleasure of God. All have received something from His gracious hand; but it requires no proof that all have not received the same. But though God is thus sovereign in His dealings, He still remembers righteousness. Where He has given much, we are assured by the Saviour, that He will ask the more; and while the servant who knew not his Lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes for neglecting it, he who knew it and did it not, shall be beaten with many. (Luke xii. 47, 48.) We are not yet arrived however, at the depth of this mighty subject. Among those who are privileged with the same opportunities of spiritual improvement, one is allowed to run on in sin till it destroys him eternally; another is arrested by the grace of God and has his feet turned into the path of life. The opportunities of Esau were equal to those of Jacob; Judas Iscariot possessed means of religious knowledge far superior to those of persecuting Saul. The grace which touched the heart of Jacob on his way to Haran, could have stayed his unhappy brother from the profane act which ruined him. And the mercy which arrested the persecutor on his way to Damascus, could have arrested the miserable traitor, ere he had completed his accursed act. Shall we ask the Almighty why He did not do so? "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I WILL HAVE MERCY" (Romans ix. 15), is the answer of His awful oracle; and woe to the creature who dares to pry into what the Creator keeps concealed! We are constrained to acknowledge the righteousness, and to

adore the sovereignty of God. The sins of Esau and of Judas were their own; they deliberately preferred the world to God, its gains to His eternal favour; and perdition was their deserved doom. But the salvation of the others was not deserved; God was made manifest to them that asked not after Him. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" (Genesis xxviii. 16), was the exclamation of astonished Jacob: "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering" (I Timothy i. 16), is the kindred declaration of St. Paul.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. There is no decree registered in heaven's eternal statute-book, against any thing but sin; or against any man, except as the wages of sin. Our final experience cannot resemble that of Esau, unless we follow Esau's steps. And if it now resemble that of Manasseh, if we can point to many whose privileges, opportunities, and advantages are far superior to ours, let us remember that the sovereign God is also the God of judgment, and that more is not expected from us than according to what has been bestowed.

But we have all received enough to lead us, if rightly improved, to God and eternal salvation. For we have been privileged with the blessed gospel which tells us of the love of God, of His mercy in passing by our transgressions, and of the kingdom of glory which He has prepared for them that love Him. And if we believe His word, put our trust in His grace, and set our hearts on His glorious promises, we are choosing that good part which shall never be taken from us.

We are reminded of all this, as the Hebrews were reminded, by the subject which we have just considered. In Jacob and Joseph, as formerly in Isaac, we behold that faith which looks at the things not seen, and believes them without hesitation, on the authority of God's word. And in the accomplishment, even to the minutest circumstance, of everything which these patriarchs expected, we behold the faithfulness and truth of Him on whose word they relied. Let us be encouraged then to follow their example, that we may inherit their blessedness both in this world and in the world to come. We are instructed also by this subject, in the true nature of blessedness. When the world goes well with us, when wealth, honour, and dignity are our portion, and prosperity attends us on the right hand and on the left, we esteem ourselves blessed. But when God tries us with the opposite, suffering our reputation to be spoiled, depriving us of health, of children, and of friends, and visiting us with adversity on adversity, we are apt to think that His blessing has departed. Perhaps however, as in the case of Manasseh and Ephraim, that which bars our worldly advancement and interferes with our worldly comfort, may be a blessing in disguise. What! exclaims the carnal-minded, Can loss of property be a blessing? It may: "Let the rich rejoice in that he is made low" (James i. 9, 10), is the counsel of inspired wisdom. The carnal-minded asks again, Can affliction and tribulation be a blessing? They may: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth...If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." (Hebrews xii. 6, 7.)

If such visitations wean our affections from a present world and teach us to fix them on the world to come, and to find our joy and consolation in the holy service of God, we shall yet look back on them as blessings, yea as the choicest blessings which we have ever received from His hand. The prosperous man therefore is not always the blessed man. He alone is truly blessed, whatever may be the character of God's present dealings with him, who is prepared by grace, through the discipline of providence here, for the kingdom of glory hereafter. May God grant, in His infinite goodness, that such experience be ours!

LECTURE XI.

FAITH'S TRIUMPH IN MOSES AS A MAN.

HEBREWS XI. 23—26.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

MOST admirable wisdom is displayed by the writer of this epistle, in that part of it which we are now considering. He is addressing Hebrews, and his purpose is to set before them, the excellency and power of faith. After referring therefore to some of those just men whose names and noble deeds were written in their own Scriptures, he goes on to bring before them the illustrious among their ancestors, and to shew that they were all actuated by this noble principle. He then reminds them of every national event in which they gloried, of every national achievement of which they boasted, of the sufferings for God and righteous-

ness which had made their national name immortal, and shews that faith was the spring and cause of all. The slightest attention to the structure of this eleventh chapter, especially from the eighth verse to the end, will prove the truth of these remarks. St. Paul, as we have already seen, having referred to Abel, Enoch, and Noah, proceeds, in that part of the chapter, to references which are peculiarly Hebrew. He begins with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers of the Jewish people. He then refers to Joseph, the man among the twelve patriarchs whom Israel most revered, as the saviour of their infant nation. Following the stream of Jewish history, he refers in the next place, as we shall see in the present lecture, to Moses their deliverer, shewing them that his preservation when a child, and his espousing their cause when come to years were equally the results of faith. This leads him, as we shall see in subsequent lectures, to speak of the preservation of Israel on the night when Egypt was smitten, of their coming forth from Egypt in spite of the wrath of Pharaoh, of their passing through the Red Sea as by dry land, of their overthrowing the Canaanite and taking possession of the promised heritage: and these things he shews to have been the results of faith, in Moses, in Joshua, and in the people whom they led. He speaks next, in the natural progress of his discourse, of the feats of arms done by their warlike fathers in the days of Israel's glory; and finally, of the sufferings for God and righteousness which were endured in the days of her declension, when persecuting kings sat on the throne and shed

the blood of saints and prophets. And what gave strength to act thus, and strength to suffer thus, was still, he shews, the same principle, confidence in God.

These were hallowed recollections for a Jew ; he could not listen to a discourse which called them up without his very heart being stirred within him. Was it faith, he would ask, which made our father Abraham and our deliverer Moses the men they were?—was it faith which delivered us from Egypt and turned the sea for us into dry ground?—was it faith which overthrew the Canaanite before Joshua, and the enemies of the Lord on every side, before the arm of David? Was it faith, he would again ask, which enabled Sampson to rend the lion, and brought the brethren of Daniel unharmed out of the midst of the furnace, and made Elijah, driven from the dwellings of men, to welcome the sheep-skin for his covering, the cave and mountain-side for his abode? Whatever I lack then, would be his conclusion, let not faith be lacking. Let me forget present sufferings, and think only of following the sainted footsteps of those who have gone before me ; being Abraham's child, let me do the works of Abraham. Such would be the natural effect of this discourse on the mind of a believing Jew. No Gentile is capable of appreciating its true eloquence and overwhelming power.

I have thus given in few words, a view of the contents of this chapter, because I have ever found that when the scope of any apostolic discourse is apprehended, the particular parts of it are more easily understood. Let us now however direct our attention to

the subject suggested by the text. It exhibits faith at once in its true nature, and in its genuine results. They are both seen, first, in the preservation of Moses, when a child, from destruction; and second, in the same Moses, when come to years, renouncing the world and casting in his lot with God's afflicted people.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

We read in the book of Exodus, that in process of time, the patriarch Joseph "died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." There arose then a new king over Egypt, who exceedingly afflicted the children of Israel. But notwithstanding the employment against them of every means which malice could suggest, they so increased and multiplied that the tyrant was alarmed. And he issued in consequence, the edict referred to in the text, commanding all the males among their little ones to be cast into the river. In these days of oppression and extremity, as Scripture proceeds to say, "there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi, and the woman...bare a son." That little one was Moses. His parents were aware of the king's commandment, that it doomed their child to destruction, and that they put their own lives in peril in attempting to preserve his. But fearless of that commandment and

leaving consequences with God, they hid him "three months."

The text teaches us to regard this behaviour as the result of faith; they acted thus, St. Paul says, "because they saw he was a proper child." We are not to understand from this language, merely that the child was fair; faith would not have recognized that circumstance as a reason for endeavouring to preserve him. St. Stephen tells us that he was "fair to God," i.e. divinely fair. His infantine beauty seems to have had a Divine character impressed upon it, marking him as God's child, as one whom God designed to do some singular work for Him on the earth. Such beauty was doubtless to the parents of Moses, a prophetic intimation of their infant's glorious career; and this accounts also, let me observe, for his early presentiment that the deliverance of Israel should be by his hand. (Acts vii. 20, original; 25.) It also explains in the most satisfactory manner, the words which we are now considering. Believing that God would preserve a life so precious, the parents of this goodly child willingly put their own lives in peril, to be the instruments of that preservation. For the king's commandment was urgent, and the hiding of their child must have been a matter of the greatest difficulty. And as his mother watched near the place of his concealment, and stole away, when unobserved, to nurse him, she must have passed many a miserably anxious day and many a sleepless night. But confidence in God sustained her and her husband through it all. And when they were not able, with all their contrivances, to con-

ceal him longer, they made "an ark of bulrushes," and confiding doubtless in the same gracious protection, "put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the "river's brink."

Such was their faith and such also were its results; let us just glance, in conclusion, at its reward. Having laid her infant in his watery cradle, in the immediate neighbourhood of the savage crocodile, and exposed to the prying eye of the more savage Egyptian murderer, the believing mother returned home, most probably to solitude and to prayer. His sister however remained behind, to watch over the fate of her brother. That fate was, to all human appearance, soon decided; the daughter of Israel's enemy and destroyer came down to the river's side and found him. But out of apparent destruction God often causes salvation to arise: that circumstance preserved his life. The edict which doomed the helpless infants to destruction, was no woman's decree; the babe wept, and the princess had compassion. She sent his sister to call a Hebrew nurse, and she returned with the child's mother. Nor was the mother kept long in anxiety; "take this child away, and nurse it for me," said the Egyptian, "and "I will give thee thy wages." Oh what must have been her feelings as she obeyed this command, as she "took the child" from the hand of Pharaoh's daughter! For it is not only that she was assured of his safety, he had been saved by the daughter of the destroyer, and from the family of that destroyer she was now to receive wages for nursing him! Let us behold in all this, the reward of faith, the reward of believing God instead of fearing man. (Exodus ii. 1—10.)

SATAN finding himself foiled in his attempt on the life of Moses, proceeded to work in another way. The preserved infant was surrounded, as he grew to years, with the temptations of luxury, wealth, and rank; he was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt and qualified to fill the highest office in her state; nay, as the adopted son of an Egyptian princess, he might have hoped to sit, one day, on Egypt's throne. The tempter thus endeavoured to turn God's good to evil, to make the very mercy which had provided for Moses an asylum from destruction, the means of turning him from the cause of righteousness and truth. And here it is well to remark that in this his singular history he was made strikingly like his Lord. For Satan sought first to slay Jesus with the sword of Herod; and when foiled in this attempt by the Father's watchful providence, he displayed all the kingdoms of the world before Him, with the offer of immediate possession, if He would consent to be his servant. It is ever thus with that restless enemy; if malice fail, he has recourse to seduction. But Moses, in this also like his Lord, was proof against the seducer. He had owed his life, when an infant, to the faith of others, and he exemplified, as a man, the power of the same principle in himself. The text proceeds,—

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than

the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

We are not told that this was always the mind of Moses. The words before us seem rather to imply that in the days of thoughtless youth, he was dazzled and intoxicated by the brilliant prospects of worldly distinction and greatness, which his connection with the royal family of Egypt opened for him. Other feelings might also mingle, other considerations might be suggested. You may be God's servant, it might be said to him, and yet be advanced in Egypt; for Joseph was God's servant, and yet only Pharaoh in the throne was greater than he. Think but for a moment of the blessing which you may prove. Is your heart set upon your poor brethren? You may be the means of lightening their bondage. Or do you desire to see the name of the God of Abraham glorified? You may be the means, in time, of recommending it to this great and mighty nation. And think of the wonderful providence which brought you into Pharaoh's house, and made you what you are; He gave these advantages that they might be used in His service, not that they might be thoughtlessly cast away. But whatever effect these worldly prospects and carnal suggestions once had on the mind of Moses, their influence ceased "when he was come to years." Reason then assumed her seat, and under the guidance of the Spirit of grace, taught him to weigh them in wisdom's balances. He learned the comparative value of this world and the next; he learned to prefer to

earthly glory the recompense of God's reward. He learned also that His sacred cause could not be served by dishonourable concealment, and that He would not bless carnal policy for the accomplishment of His gracious designs. The course of Moses was now soon decided; he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This step was indeed a death-blow to all his hopes on earth; but he did not hesitate on that account to take it. And it was not taken in the days of intemperate youth, under the impulse of excitement and enthusiasm, but "when he was come to years." It was the fruit therefore of the solid judgment and calm deliberation of the matured man.

Moses, in acting thus, had two things to choose between; and greater opposites can scarcely be conceived. There were "the pleasures of sin" and "the treasures in Egypt" on the one hand; for by allowing himself to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had the prospect of a life of princely wealth and magnificence at the court of the first monarch on earth. There was "affliction with the people of God," and "the reproach of Christ" on the other hand; for by confessing himself an Hebrew, he could look forward to nothing else. The people of God were then Pharaoh's bondmen. Their lives were made bitter by the most rigorous and galling service, and they had their full share of that contempt and ignominy which is inseparable from the lot of the slave. They had also a peculiar source of suffering, not the reproach of ordinary slavery, but "the reproach of Christ," i.e. of the chosen people of the one true God. Idolatrous

Egypt hated them because they bore His name. Nor was Egypt unacquainted with His promise that Abraham's seed should yet be masters of all the earth; it was fear of the fulfilment of that promise which seems to have first suggested to Pharaoh the thought of bringing them into bondage. (Exodus i. 9, 10.) But now that they were in bondage, this promise was turned to their reproach. The cruel task-master, as he urged them with his whip, would remind them with bitter taunts, of the high hopes of their nation, and ask them, in tones of insolent derision, Where was now their God? Moses had to choose then whether he would bask in the sunshine of royal favour, or by confessing himself a son of Abraham, share with Abraham's persecuted family in this cruel affliction and reproach. And he made his choice, as we have seen; preferring Christ to the world.

With respect to this choice, be it also further observed, that it was not between the world and Christ merely; it was between the world at its very best, and Christ at His very worst. For while Egypt laid her honours at his feet, Christ offered no worldly recompense save affliction, reproach, and shame. And he preferred, not the happiness of serving Christ, but this reproach and affliction for His sake to all that Egypt could offer; he took His *bitter* in preference to the world's *sweet*.

But why could not Moses, like Joseph before him, have accepted with a good conscience, Egypt's offered wealth and honours? One word in the text is our answer; Egypt's pleasures were those "of sin."

The court and nation were sunk in the most debasing idolatry and in the vices which idolatry sanctions; and Moses could not have accepted what they offered, without conniving at and taking part in their iniquities. It was quite otherwise with Joseph. Egypt regarded him as her benefactor, and his religion was therefore forgiven. But what was forgiven to him would not have been forgiven to Moses. Joseph dwelt in Egypt as an acknowledged Hebrew, and an acknowledged worshipper of the God of the Hebrews (Genesis xli. 12; xlii. 18; xliii. 23, 32); but the courtly favour which Moses enjoyed, depended on his being recognized as an adopted Egyptian, "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." To have secured to himself therefore the continuance of that favour, he must have forgotten that he was of Abraham, he must have denied Abraham's God. But Moses loved the God of his fathers too well, and valued his Hebrew birthright too highly, to consent for a moment to such terms. His spirit also, like that of St. Paul at Athens, was doubtless stirred within him, when he saw the brutal debasement of a mighty nation, from the monarch on the throne to the servant behind the mill. And as that nation, in her enmity to the one true Object of worship, went on to persecute and afflict His people, Moses could keep silence no longer; impelled by holy zeal he proclaimed himself a son of Abraham, and a worshipper of Abraham's God. This zeal was inspired by love.

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach and welcome shame,
So thou remember me."

Thus Moses felt, and his conduct was the result of this feeling.

The text, in conformity with this, ascribes his conduct to faith; for faith, be it ever remembered, is the root and source of love. He did not esteem reproach and affliction to be better in themselves than ease and honour; it is not in human nature to think so, and the Saviour Himself was not of such a mind. But faith sees "Him who is invisible;" and this faith enabled Moses to apprehend something of the grace and goodness of God. Affliction for His sake and with His people, appeared therefore better in his eyes than opulence and distinction obtained by denying Him. The same faith told him moreover that God would reward such behaviour, and "he had respect to "the recompense of" this "reward." The pleasures of sin were temporary; faith told him that this recompense was eternal: the treasures in Egypt availed for this world only; faith told him that a day was coming when one pang endured for Christ should make the sufferer rich for ever. The love of God flowing thus into the heart by faith, expelled the love of the world; and expectation from God prevailed to lift the mind above the seductions of pomp and magnificence surrounding him on every side.

Before taking leave of the history of this man of God, let us just glance for a moment, at the reward which his faith received. In His merciful dealings with His people God never falls within, but always exceeds their expectations. Moses, in making the sacrifices which he did, expected to be recompensed in

this world, by being used of God in the work of delivering Israel. (Acts vii. 23—25.) And we have seen already that in relinquishing sin's temporary pleasures, he looked for an eternal recompense. It is superfluous to say that these expectations were realized; they have been exceeded an hundred fold. The time came round when in fulfilment of God's purpose, Moses was sent into Egypt to bring forth His people. He was then distinguished as no servant of God had been before him, neither shall there be any after him. When Pharaoh refused to let them go, it was given to him to shew such signs and wonders before that monarch and before all his servants, as had not been in Egypt since it became a nation. It was given to him also to lead Israel out of it, to guide them for forty years in the wilderness, and to conduct them to the borders of the promised land. Nor was this all. It was given to him to set in order God's holy worship; and the Most High revealed Himself to him "face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." He was also the mediator between God and Israel, the most eminent of the types of Messiah. And these honours were his recompense in this world merely; if we would see the reward of faith, we must follow him into the world to come. There are two intimations concerning him in New-Testament Scripture. He "appeared in glory," in company with Elias; and they talked with Jesus, when He was transfigured on the Mount. (Luke ix. 28—36.) And one of the three disciples who saw him on that memorable occasion, mentions his name again in connection with the visions

of the kingdom. The victors over the beast, he tells us, who "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God,...sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and "the song of the Lamb." (Rev. xv. 1—4.) We may judge from these intimations, of the nearness of Moses to his Saviour, and of the place which he occupies in the heavenly world. For surely it is not a light thing that "the harps of God" should be tuned to sing his song, and that his name should be written beside that of "the everlasting Son of the Father." These honours moreover are everlasting. And thus he who looked for the recompense of God's reward, did obtain and is obtaining it; yea, and he shall obtain it.

THIS reference to the early preservation and future history of their deliverer, was peculiarly suitable to the circumstances in which the Hebrews were then placed. Their brethren after the flesh had vowed their destruction and were thirsting to shed their blood. Let not this appear a strange thing, the Apostle would say; this deadly hatred to the Church and people of God, has marked the world from the beginning; look back on the early history of our nation and remember the bloody edict of the Egyptian king. And faith, he would add, finds God a refuge and defence in the most evil circumstances and in the darkest hour; look at the example set before you by the parents of Moses; "they were not afraid of the king's commandment;" they prevailed, in spite of it, to save their child. Be not ye afraid then of the persecuting Sanhedrim and of the cruel Gentile governors; the violence of Pharaoh

was not able to exterminate the seed of Jacob, and their violence, directed now against the seed of promise, shall prove equally powerless in its turn. Does God call on you, to surrender for His sake, your worldly advantages and comforts? Look at the example of Moses: he surrendered them of his own accord. Is God now forcing on you in His providence, the alternative of sin or suffering; of respite, ease, and comfort by denying Him on the one hand; or affliction with His people and the reproach of Christ on the other? Remember the example of Moses: he took the bitter potion prepared by the hand of Christ, and drank it for His sake; he refused the honeyed cup which a smiling world had to offer. And if you would follow this bright example, follow the faith which led to it; have respect, with Moses, to the recompense of God's reward.

These lessons are for us also. This Scripture teaches us, when in the path of duty, to have faith in God and fear nothing; it tells us that we shall be left for ever without excuse, if we prefer the world and its fleeting interests to His salvation and eternal promises.

That bloody edict which commanded every Egyptian subject (Exodus i. 22) to cast the infants of the Hebrews into the Nile, exposed without doubt, to peril, yea probably to certain death, those who should be found concealing them. But the parents of Moses knew that they did the will of God in concealing him, and therefore braved the danger. God seemed for a while, to leave them to the consequences of their act;

for when they exposed their infant in his ark of bul-rushes, detection appeared certain and unavoidable. But let us see "the end of the Lord" (James v. 11) before we judge Him. He warded off that danger, turning it, as we have seen, into the very means of safety; He both protected and rewarded her who had perilled her life to save her infant for His service. And if we had seen her on the evening of that memorable day, as she folded that infant to the bosom of maternal love, she would surely have sought to impress on us as the lesson of her experience, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (I Peter iii. 13.)

We have seen also the choice which Moses made when come to years; he did not hesitate between the world and Christ. Are we indeed of opinion that this was the choice of wisdom? He has once visited this earth since he left it, for he "appeared in glory," as we have already seen, when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount. Let us suppose that the disciples had said to him on that memorable occasion, You once had hopes of the throne of Egypt, tell us, if you regret now that you sacrificed these hopes for Christ? What answer would Moses have returned? We start at the question: it is blasphemy, we say, to compare the throne of Egypt to the glory of God. Let us rather shew however that this is indeed our judgment, by following the example of Moses. And how inexcusable does that example leave us, if we decline to follow it! For the circumstances of the vast majority of gospel-hearers differ in two important respects from those of Moses; and in

both, they have the advantage over him. When he was tempted to forsake his Redeemer, it was by the world in its very best estate. Distinction and glory were proposed to him; a crown and sceptre appeared in the distance. How very few are there to whom the world makes such offers as these! To the great majority she offers, in comparison, a very moderate portion; and with all the activity and diligence which men employ, that portion remains moderate still. Again, when the world sought to tempt Moses from his Saviour's side, Christ was surrounded with everything calculated to repel from His service; affliction, reproach, and shame were the recompense of cleaving to Him. But now, in the good providence of God, this is no longer the case, at least in this favoured land. We may serve Christ without being afflicted for it; the ungodly may hate and revile, but it is beyond their power to harm us. Our choice does not lie therefore between the opposites proposed to Moses. Christ sets before us on the one hand, the incomparable sweetness of His blessed service, unalloyed by any bitterness. And the world sets before us on the other, her very moderate portion, mixed too and alloyed with vexation, anxiety, and care. In making, in his circumstances, the choice which he did, Moses shewed that he was of one mind with his Saviour; that in his judgment it profited a man nothing to gain "the whole world, and lose his own soul." By making in our circumstances the opposite choice, we shew that we are of a very different mind; that in our judgment it may profit a man much to neglect eternal salvation, if he gain but a little of the world. "What shall

“man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew xvi. 26) is the solemn question of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing so momentary, so trifling, so vile as not to be a worthy exchange for it, is the answer of the conduct of multitudes. The behaviour of Moses was the result of faith; and men act in the fearful manner now referred to, because they have no faith. They do not look for the recompense of God's reward; His redeeming love and everlasting promises are the mere articles of a creed; they are not present to the mind as certainties, as real things. God forbid, that this should be the case with us! May He be pleased to reveal His glory in our hearts as He did in the heart of Moses, and to grant us the fellowship of his faith! Then shall we follow his sainted steps in this life, and be recompensed with him in the blessed life to come.

LECTURE XII.

FAITH'S TRIUMPH IN MOSES AS A MINISTER.

HEBREWS XI. 28.

“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born, should touch them.”

HAVING referred to the preservation of Moses, when an infant, from destruction, and to his heroic self-devotedness in after years, and having reminded the Hebrews that both were the results of faith, St. Paul proceeds to speak of the deliverance of Israel from bondage, reminding his countrymen that it too was faith's achievement. He particularizes three things as worthy of everlasting remembrance; the forsaking of Egypt, the keeping the passover and sprinkling of blood, and the passing through the Red Sea. The second of these things, will be the subject of our present consideration. The first and third have a natural connection, and will form a separate subject.

In that part of the history of Moses to which the words of the text refer, we discern again the true nature and genuine results of faith. He took God's word as

his evidence of the approach of a catastrophe of which there was no visible sign ; and believing God, he implicitly obeyed His voice. We shall find that this was the case when we compare the book of Exodus with the text ; and the same comparison will discover to us the reward which this faith received. We may then consider the application of the subject, first to those to whom this epistle was originally written, and second, to the Catholic Church of God.

God was pleased, as we saw in the last lecture, to send Moses into Egypt, as the commissioned deliverer of His people the children of Israel. It is worthy of remark, as a proof of the Divine long-suffering, that the first word of threatening which was delivered in His name to Pharaoh, was the last to be put in execution. Tell him, He said, "Israel is my son, even my first-born : "...let my son go, that he may serve me:...if thou refuse "...I will slay thy son, even thy first-born" (Exodus iv. 22, 23). There was nothing equivocal in this language. It announced Israel's nearness to God, and their high destiny as the first of the nations (Psalm lxxxix. 27) ; it warned the Egyptian monarch that if, in pride and jealousy, he sought to thwart God's purpose to exalt them, his crime should be fearfully visited ; his first-born smitten, should avenge God's first-born oppressed. And it was so. Lesser plagues were sent on the Egyptians in the first place. The river was smitten ; frogs, lice, and flies filled and defiled the land ; their cattle, and then their harvest, were destroyed ; the devouring locusts ate up the residue ; darkness which might be felt, affrighted them for three days. But when

these things failed to subdue the spirit of the king and to humble his obstinate people, God, true to His word, fell back on His original threatening; "I will go out" He said to Moses, "into the midst of Egypt, and all "the first-born shall die" (Exodus xi. 4, 5). He then commanded him to tell the children of Israel to take steps for their own preservation. They were to take a lamb of the first year and without blemish, and to kill it in the evening. Its flesh was to be roasted with fire and to be eaten; unleavened bread and bitter herbs were to be the accompaniments of the sacred meal. They were to eat it moreover with the loins girt, the shoes on the feet, the staff in the hand, and in haste. Nor was this all; they were also to take the blood and strike it on the side-posts and upper door-posts of their houses. "For I" said the Lord, "will pass through "the land of Egypt, and will smite all the first-born;" but "the blood shall be a token on the houses where "ye are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Moses kept "through faith," as the text declares, this passover and sprinkling of blood. Human reason would have objected that there was no visible appearance of the approach of this terrible catastrophe; it would have argued with much plausibility that even though this death were on its way, Israel had no cause to fear it, and no need to take precautions against it. But Moses presumed neither to object nor to argue; he had received the Divine warning and direction, and faith asked no more. He communicated this warning and direction to the people whom he was appointed to lead, and not only complied with it himself, but caused them to comply

along with him. He "called for all the elders of Israel," and declared to them the words of the Lord; and "the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Exodus xii. 3—28).

This faith was most signally rewarded; Moses and Israel with him escaped the destruction which followed. The Almighty, faithful to His threatening, smote all Egypt's first-born in that awful night, "from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle." And the cry of a smitten people went up to heaven, "for there was not an house where there was not one dead." But not a dog moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel; they went forth unharmed and at liberty, yea they were laden with gifts and honours, for their fear fell on their oppressors. "It is a night" says the sacred historian, "to be much observed unto the Lord;" it is memorable to all generations for the destruction of His enemies, and for the glorious deliverance of the people who had trusted in His plighted word (Exodus xii. 29—42).

NEARLY all the examples of faith selected by the Apostle in this chapter, have had some particular bearing on the circumstances in which the Hebrews were then placed. The same thing is obviously true of that which we have just considered. The Hebrews had heard their Saviour's warning (Matthew xxiv. 1, 2, 15—22), and were aware that destruction should soon overtake their country; yea, that destruction was already on the wing; they saw "the day approaching." St. Paul has

reminded them of this in the immediate context, and urged them to cleave to the Saviour ; he has told them expressly that it should be their only means of preservation when the tempest of wrath should arise (Hebrews x. 23—31). Nothing therefore could be more seasonable than the reference which the text contains, to the preservation of their fathers on the night when Egypt was smitten. They abode, says the Apostle, within their blood-sprinkled dwellings and ate their passover ; and they were in safety while destruction raged without. Be ye found in like manner, he would say, feeding by faith on Christ the true passover, and sheltering yourselves under the covert of His blood ; and ye also shall be in safety when God takes vengeance on His foes. There is moreover, let me observe, a most striking connection between the train of thought which the reference of the text was calculated to awaken in the mind of the believing Hebrews, and that which would be awakened by the reference immediately preceding. The bloody edict and persecuting violence of Pharaoh, together with the preservation and heroic behaviour of Moses, taught them that faith could lift above the fear of man ; whilst the preservation of their fathers when Egypt was visited for that cruelty, reminded them that the same faith could deliver from the wrath of God. Cleave to your Saviour then, the Apostle would say, and you shall not be afraid of your persecutors ; cleave to your Saviour, he would again say, and you shall be preserved in the day of their destruction.

LET us not be contented however with the peculiar

reference of the text to the Hebrews, but consider its catholic application and the instruction which we ourselves may derive from it. To apprehend this, we must remember the typical import of what Moses was commanded to do, and of the whole transaction to which the words before us refer. The paschal lamb was typical; its death and the sprinkling of its blood were also typical. The same character belonged to the sacrificial meal with its unleavened bread and bitter herbs, yea even to the very peculiar and hasty manner in which that meal was to be eaten. The children of Israel in observing these things, were themselves a type; Egypt's first-born and their destruction, were the same. And finally, the preservation of those who observed this sacred solemnity, was the most important type of all. We shall consider these things in detail. They will teach us how to follow the example of Moses and of Israel; they will point out to us in the clearest manner, the way of everlasting salvation.

A lamb was provided for this solemnity. Christ is the true lamb; "Behold the Lamb of God," were the words of His inspired forerunner. (John i. 36.) This lamb was without blemish; and the Lamb of God is "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Hebrews vii. 26); "a Lamb," says St. Peter, "without blemish and without spot." (I Peter i. 18, 19.) Israel's lamb was sacrificed as the passover-offering; and "even Christ "our passover," says St. Paul, "is sacrificed for us," (I Corinthians v. 7.) The true passover then was killed, when Jesus gave up the ghost. Again, when Israel's passover was killed, the blood was not allowed

to be spilt on the ground, but was taken up and sprinkled on their dwellings. It is the same with the blood of the true passover; it is too precious to be wasted. "Elect unto obedience," says St. Peter, "and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (I Peter i. 2): "let us draw near" says St. Paul, "with hearts "sprinkled," for "ye are come to the blood of sprinkling." (Hebrews x. 22; xii. 24.) The real sprinkling however is as much better than its type, as Christ the true passover is better than Israel's lamb. For while the typical sprinkling was on the dwellings of the faithful, its antitype is on the faithful themselves, quieting the conscience and bringing heavenly peace to the heart. The texts just quoted shew this in a very striking way. St. Paul, as we have seen, says that the heart is sprinkled; and goes on to tell us that this sprinkling is "from an evil conscience." He tells us moreover, in the other Scripture referred to, that "the blood of sprinkling" ministers this peace, because it "speaketh better things than that of Abel," i.e. tells of loving-kindness and forgiving mercy. This explains why St. Peter has conjoined obedience with the sprinkling of Christ's blood. It is the spirit of adoption which obeys, and we are conscious to its blessed liberty as our hearts feel the power of this blood. To keep the true sprinkling of blood then, is to have peace with God through Christ, and to serve Him as His children,

But Moses and Israel with him, while they sprinkled the blood, also ate the passover. To feed on Christ, is to eat the true passover. "I am the living

"bread which came down from heaven," said the Saviour; "and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And again, "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed:...he that eateth me, even he shall live by me: ...whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life:...except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John vi. 51—57.) It is by partaking of food that our bodies are nourished, and that we are fitted and enabled for the daily duties of life. And it is in like manner, by bearing about in daily, believing remembrance, the unspeakable love of Jesus and His everlasting mercy, that we are strengthened for His holy service, the service of His Father and our Father, His God and our God. For Christ then dwells "in our hearts by faith," and strengthens us with "might" continually "by His Spirit in the inner man." (Ephesians iii. 16, 17.) "I am crucified with Christ," says St. Paul; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Galatians ii. 20.) To live this life, is to keep the true passover; we feed on Christ, when we thus live by Him as He lived by the Father. (John vi. 57.) But lest any should profess to be so living, and to have found shelter under the covert of Christ's sprinkled blood, whilst they are cleaving in their hearts to sin and practising it in their lives, the Jewish sacrificial meal has yet more instruction for us. It was to be eaten

“with unleavened bread.” We have an inspired exposition of this type. “Let us keep the feast,” says St. Paul, “not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (I Corinthians v. 8.) And he practised this precept in his own life. “Our rejoicing is this,” he writes to the Corinthians, “the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” (II Corinthians i. 12.) “Pray for us,” he asks the Hebrews: “for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” (Hebrews xiii. 18.) “Herein do I exercise myself” is his declaration before Felix, “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” (Acts xxiv. 16.) For as unleavened bread was the necessary accompaniment of the passover, a good conscience is the necessary accompaniment and unfailing result of faith. If the one be neglected, the other cannot possibly be preserved. “Holding faith, and a good conscience,” says St. Paul; “which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” (I Timothy i. 19.) This indissoluble connection arises from the nature of faith. The blood in which we trust for pardon, reveals the malignity of sin; so that it is impossible to trust in that blood, and yet continue in the practice of iniquity. And it is equally impossible to bear about in daily remembrance, the deep reality of Christ’s love to ourselves and to mankind, without being taught in return to love that

Saviour sincerely, to render to Him that obedience which flows from sincere affection, and to seek, for His sake, the welfare and blessing of all. _ If our profession of faith be without this accompaniment, God has pronounced it insincere. "If any man say, I know "Him," says St. John, "and keepeth not His commandments, he is a liar." (I John ii. 4.) These things explain also another accompaniment of the passover. It was to be eaten "with bitter herbs," typical doubtless of the bitterness of godly sorrow. Let us remember St. Peter. He denied three times, with oaths and curses, that he had ever seen his Master's face. But the injured Master turned and looked on His servant. And with the look there rushed into the servant's mind the remembrance of that kindness on which he had trampled, of that faithful love to which he had proved unfaithful, of that gracious heart which his ingratitude had wounded. That look told him moreover that the injured One was still kind and gracious, and that while He deeply felt the unkindness shewn to Him, He forgave it from His heart. The backslider was melted in an instant; he "went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke xxii. 61, 62.) And all pass through a similar experience who taste "that the Lord is gracious." The blood of Jesus speaking peace to the heart, is as the look which He bestowed on St. Peter. It tells us that He has loved us and given His life to save us from death; it tells us that all our past sins and provocations have been done against this love, have been our requital of this mercy; it tells us that He whom we have injured so

deeply, forgives till seventy times seven, blots out our transgressions for His own sake and will not remember our sins. These assurances give peace indeed, but they make us weep bitterly. And as we go on to remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us, we cannot forget all that we have done against Him; the remembrance of sin is kept alive by the remembrance of love, and we continue to weep bitterly. Though this love teaches us moreover to walk before Him in godly sincerity, making it the business of our lives to do His will, we are constrained to compare its largeness with our shortcoming, its abundance with our miserably inadequate returns, and the tears of filial and godly sorrow flow afresh as we make this comparison. And thus the things which met in the type, meet also in the antitype. The unleavened bread and bitter herbs were not to be separated from the paschal lamb and its sprinkled blood; and we shall not find them in separation now. For till the love of God has touched the heart, there will be no sincerity of desire to serve Him, neither will there be any repentance to salvation. But where the slain Lamb of God is the object of unfeigned faith, and the conscience is pacified by His precious blood, there will be found also the sincerity of holiness and godly sorrow for sin.

Israel ate the passover, let me further observe, in a very peculiar manner. Their loins were girded, their shoes were on their feet, their staff was in their hand, and they ate as men in haste. They did so by the instructions of Moses, and their peculiar circum-

stances rendered these instructions necessary. As they sat down to their sacred meal, the destruction of the first-born commenced, and they expected every instant, as they ate, to hear the word of their leader commanding them to arise and follow him. No man therefore had his loins ungirt, no man had his shoes or staff to seek; all were ready, that when that word was given, they might arise and set forth immediately. And Israel in this respect is our example. As we shelter ourselves under the covert of Christ's atoning blood, and live on Him by faith, we must anxiously await the word of our heavenly leader, summoning us to follow Him into the everlasting kingdom, the Canaan of God. We know not at what moment that word may come; it may come at any time; Christ has left us uncertain just that we may be ready. His warning to us is that of Moses to Israel, "Let your loins be girded about... and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." (Luke xii. 35, 36.) If an Israelite had been found unprepared when the word of Moses was heard, he would have been left behind in Egyptian slavery. And our Lord has warned us, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." (Matt. xxiv. 44.) If our hearts be overcharged with...cares of this life, and that day come upon us unawares (Luke xxi. 34), we shall be excluded from the eternal inheritance. It will be too late then to prepare ourselves. When the cry was made, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," the foolish virgins thought to do so; but alas, "the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him...and

"the door was shut." These foolish ones knocked indeed, but it was in vain; "I know you not," was the answer of the Lord. (Matt. xxv. 10—12.) Let us be instructed then and let us also be warned; let us have the shod feet and girded loins of the Israelite, let us eat our passover as men in haste to be gone.

I have thus endeavoured to explain the spiritual meaning of the Jewish sacrificial meal with its commanded and necessary accompaniments. Some may perhaps suppose that the Lord's Supper is the Christian passover. It may be called so in one sense, for it is the corresponding sacrament of the new dispensation; but to speak of baptism and the Lord's Supper as if they were the antitypes of circumcision and the passover, is most dangerous and misleading language. An antitype is the spiritual reality which a type shadows forth. But we cannot say that every baptized person has received the true circumcision; and we may deceive ourselves most fatally if we conclude that because we partake of the bread and wine, we are feeding on the true passover. It ought indeed to be so; but, alas, with neither ordinance, is it necessarily the case. The true circumcision is "made without hands," and consists "in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," (Colossians ii. 11). It "is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter," (Romans ii. 29). He who has received such a heart and spirit from the Lord, has received the true circumcision, and will be found also feeding on the true passover. This may be made further evident from the text. Israel who kept the passover and sprinkling of blood were typical of true

Christians, "the Israel of God," (Galatians vi. 16). And St. Paul describes the true Christian, "We are "the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, "and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence "in the flesh," (Philippians iii. 3). This then is the character of the keepers of the true passover. They worship and serve God as His children; they rejoice by faith in Christ their Saviour, knowing themselves to be ruined by transgression, and having no hope except in Him. It is indeed in eating the holy supper that they especially feed on Him, and especially remember Him, for He has said, "do this in remembrance "of me." But as the believer always remembers, so he always feeds upon his Saviour, that he may live and walk with God. The act of the Jew was outward and was therefore quickly finished; the true Christian's act is spiritual, and is on that account continual.

But we have not yet done with the typical character of this famous transaction. Egypt also is typical. "Their dead bodies," says the Apocalyptic Seer, speaking of God's witnesses, "shall lie in the street of the "great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and "Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified," (Revelation xi. 8). That great city, as is manifest from the immediately-succeeding context, comprises the people, kindreds, tongues, and nations of the earth, and is in short, this evil world. It is called Sodom for its wickedness; it is called Egypt because it has ever oppressed God's saints, and been to them the house of bondage; a character which was branded on its forehead, when it crucified the King of saints. God took

vengeance on that Egypt which oppressed the seed of Abraham, by smiting its first-born. He shall take the like vengeance on spiritual Egypt. The first-born signifies whatever is pre-eminent in dignity, power, and glory. "Reuben," said his father Jacob, "thou art my first-born,...the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power," (Genesis xlix. 3). "I will make Him my first-born," says Jehovah, speaking of Messiah, "higher than the kings of the earth," (Psalm lxxxix. 27). And St. Paul testifies of Him that He is "the first-born" i. e. the most excellent, the most exalted "of every creature," (Colossians i. 15). The first-born of Egypt then are an evident type of the excellency of this world's dignity, power, and glory. And their destruction on the very night when Moses led Israel forth, is as evidently typical of that fearful wrath which shall overtake the world in the day when Christ appears, that wrath which shall lay the excellency of man's dignity, power, and glory for ever in the dust. "The day of the Lord of Hosts" says the prophet, "shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." The Lord shall hew down "the cedars of Lebanon" and "the oaks of Bashan;" He shall level "every high mountain," and "all the hills that are lifted up;" He shall overthrow "every high tower, and every fenced wall;" He shall break "all the ships of Tarshish," and spoil "all pleasant pictures." "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted." And the day of which he speaks thus, is the day of

Christ's second appearing, when to use his own language, "the Lord ariseth to shake terribly the earth," (Isaiah ii. 12—19). It is that day which shall bear so heavily on the haughty and the proud, which shall spoil the wealth, the pomp, and the glory of the nations. When the Lord smote the first-born, "there was a great cry in "Egypt." But it was only a feeble type of that more dreadful cry which shall ascend from a smitten world.

"See, the stars from heaven are falling,
Hark, on earth the dreadful cry,
Men on rocks and mountains calling,
Hide us, hide us from His eye."

But He comes then who made rocks and mountains, and whom rocks and mountains obey, and the wide creation affords not a shelter from the searching glance of that eye and the terrible vengeance of His hand.

And shall there be no deliverance in that day of consternation and fear? Yes; in Christ deliverance shall be found. Such was the wondrous efficacy of the passover and sprinkled blood, that "He that destroyed "the first-born" did not even "touch" the observers of that sacred solemnity. Moses and Israel went forth unharmed, and took the road which led to their promised inheritance, the land of milk and honey. And it shall be so again. Those who have fled for refuge to the covert of a Saviour's blood and lived by faith on Jesus, shall not only be safe in the day of the destruction of the wicked, but shall be invited by Him into the eternal inheritance. They "shall come to Zion with songs and "everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy "and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," (Isaiah xxxv. 10).

Are we then, let me ask, following the example of Moses? Are we keeping "the passover and the sprinkling of blood?" Have we received the Divine testimony concerning our ruined condition, and have we fled from the wrath to come, to the covert of the blood of Jesus? Are we now feeding on Christ by faith, cherishing the remembrance of His love and everlasting mercy as our daily and continual joy? Have we surrendered our affections to Him who has loved us and had mercy on us, and is it now the object of our lives to serve Him? Are we sincerely turning from every thing which grieves His holy Spirit, and are our daily offences and shortcomings the cause of our daily sorrow? And in what temper of mind are we eating the Lord's passover? Are we like men that wait for their Lord; does the mantle of earthly enjoyment hang loose about us, ready to be dropped when He shall give the word? We may all indeed have passed from this mortal stage, before Christ shall come the second time and lead His Church into her inheritance; but if we are prepared for this coming and are awaiting it joyfully, we are prepared to go to Him by death whenever He shall please to call us. Let us ask these questions of our own hearts, and return an impartial answer. An experimental acquaintance with these things is essential to our eternal salvation; if we know nothing of them, we are in danger of perishing for ever. Let us not say that we shall have peace because the blood of Christ was shed for us. Israel was saved on the night when Egypt was smitten, not merely by killing the passover, but by sprinkling its blood also, and eating it. And

we, in like manner, are saved not merely because Christ has died for us, but by living on Him by faith, and having our consciences pacified in His blood.

We have learned already that to partake of the holy communion is not necessarily to keep the true passover and sprinkling of blood. But it is fit that we remember on the other hand, that such participation is designed by God as the means of enabling us to do so, and that if we participate in faith, we are doing so. Receiving the bread as the body which was broken for us, we eat of that flesh which was given for the life of the world. And taking the cup as the new covenant of forgiveness in His blood, we receive that sprinkling of the conscience which is the assurance of eternal peace. That cup moreover looks forward to the kingdom; Christ has promised to drink it with us, when He comes again, (Matthew xxvi. 29). And when we drink it now in faith of this blessed promise, our affections are carried away from present things, and we are taught to look for that kingdom with expectation and ardent desire. May God grant unto us so to eat and drink at His table in His Church on earth! It shall be our preparation for eating and drinking at His table in the kingdom of glory, (Luke xxii. 30).

LECTURE XIII.

FAITH'S TRIUMPH IN MOSES AS A LEADER.

HEBREWS XI. 27, 29.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.”

WE come now to consider those other two acts of Moses as the head and leader of Israel, to which reference was made in the last lecture. St. Paul ascribes them both to the power of faith in God. He points out in the clearest manner, the true nature of faith as displayed in them, its genuine results also, and its triumphant and glorious reward. Detailed consideration of them will bring these points successively before us; and when we have thus gathered the instruction of the text, we shall consider its application to the Hebrews and to ourselves.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

Moses forsook Egypt twice. He forsook it the first time through fear and alone, when Pharaoh sought to kill him; he forsook it the second time by faith, and

took all Israel with him, not fearing Pharaoh's wrath. The words before us refer to this second forsaking, and to the whole transaction of the deliverance of Israel from bondage. Moses set his hand to this achievement, and in spite of Pharaoh's wrath, triumphantly accomplished it. A comparison of the text with Old Testament-history, will throw great light upon both. We have only to refer to the circumstances in which Moses was placed, and to the work which was given him to do, to see at once that he had abundant cause for fear; whilst the words before us discover the holy principle which rendered him insensible to its influence.

Moses had forgotten the dignities and prospects of his youth, and was engaged in the humble duties of a shepherd, when God suddenly invested him with that high commission, to which reference has been already made. He desired him to proceed into Egypt, to seek an audience of Pharaoh, and to command that prince, in His name, to let His people go. This command, as Moses knew, would be most unwelcome. Pharaoh and his people, by keeping Israel in bondage, were then enjoying the services of nearly two millions of slaves; they had built for him his treasure-cities, and were employed by them in all manner of toil and hard labour in the field. When this errand therefore was first proposed to him, he prayed to be excused, saying, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" And even after he was assured of the Divine presence and aid, he was still unwilling to proceed: "O my Lord," he said, "send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." (Exodus iii. 11; iv. 13.) Nor need

it surprise us that he thus feared "the wrath of the king." Let us look at the feeling which is always manifested by those nations which hold property in slaves. We may take as an example, the Southern States of the American Union while yet slavery subsisted there. The boldest-hearted philanthropist in England, would not have undertaken a crusade through these states against it; the first opening of his mouth would have been his destruction. The eminent American philanthropist Dr. Channing undertook and pleaded powerfully, not many years ago, the cause of that degraded class. And the slave-holders of South Carolina declared that if he dared to enter their precincts, "a body-guard of twenty thousand men" should not protect him from their vengeance. And America is not singular in this feeling. This British nation once sanctioned slavery, and British merchants carried on the traffic. It pleased God to stir up His people within these kingdoms, to plead with their brethren and beseech them to abandon such wickedness. And it is within the memory of the present generation that those who did so, received at the hand of Britons, as the reward of their labour of love, the most injurious, nay savage treatment. One who visited every city in England on this errand of mercy,* has told us that the first glimpse of the smoke of Bristol made his heart to faint within him, and that the thought of the reception which awaited him from the merchants of that city, almost turned him back. What then must Moses have felt, as he advanced from Midian and

* Clarkson.

caught the first glimpse of Egypt in the distance! He had fled across its border forty years before, when interference on behalf of a single Israelite had nearly cost him his life; what violence, what furious rage must he now then have expected to encounter! These attempts of British and American philanthropy are moreover a very feeble illustration of the subject; they will not bear for a moment, comparison with his undertaking. All that was done in England, was by remonstrance and argument, and the same character belongs to all that was done in America. But Moses was charged to demand and with authority: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel" was his message, "Let my people go." (Exodus v. 1.) England and America, we must also remember, are Christian nations, under the instruction of a Christian ministry; the speaker and listener acknowledged a common God and Father, and the humanizing influences of the same blessed and holy religion. How very different were the circumstances of Moses! He had no common feeling, no brotherly sympathy to which he might appeal; the prince and people to whom he was sent, were sunk in the most debasing heathenism. The Pharaoh who then sat on the throne of Egypt, was, like the rest of his royal race, an uncontrolled and haughty despot; and till Moses sought an audience and delivered his message, he had probably never conceived it possible that any power in heaven or earth, could interfere with his absolute will.* We are astonished, as we read, that

* This Pharaoh was probably Tothmosis II. See Speaker's Bible on Exodus.

the boldness of that message did not bring down on the speaker the tyrant's immediate vengeance. And there is in truth, only one explanation of this; the protection of the invisible God was around His servant, and that panoply was "vengeance-proof."

We learn also from this last remark, what strengthened the heart of Moses and made him ultimately successful in an undertaking so full of peril. It was not the possession of miraculous powers. They were necessary indeed for the accomplishment of his appointed work, and they probably inspired Pharaoh with a superstitious dread of his person. But the text refers, not to them but to faith in God, as that which encouraged him to persevere. It also describes this faith: "He endured," it tells us, "as seeing Him who is invisible." He shrank as a man, from being exposed to the wrath of Pharaoh. And he had cause to do so: the outbreaks of its fury sometimes threatened his life. Before the plague of locusts, both he and Aaron "were driven out from Pharaoh's presence," (Exodus x. 11). And after the plague of darkness the tyrant threatened him: "See my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die," (Exodus x. 28). But faith enabled him to endure this violence, for it assured him of God's protection, and that Pharaoh could not destroy him. He saw with the outward eye the king of Egypt frowning in his rage, but the eye of faith discerned the King of heaven smiling in His love. And the smile visible to faith only, which he thus discerned in the Divine countenance, enabled Moses to bear the frown of man. What a striking testimony this affords to the true nature

of faith ! It is indeed both the evidence and substantial presence of things not seen : Moses "endured, *as seeing* ;" i.e. he was inspired by it with the boldness of a man *who actually saw* the invisible God beside him. And we cannot follow him through his long course of arduous and anxious trial from his first audience of Pharaoh to the night of his forsaking Egypt, without being furnished with an equally striking example of that persevering determination to do the will of God which is faith's natural and necessary result. Nor must we forget the events of that night, the smiting of the first-born and the deep humiliation to which the haughty Pharaoh was in consequence reduced. He implored the departure of Israel ; he even begged their blessing, (Exodus xii. 31, 32). For these things set before us, in a manner equally striking and consolatory, faith's certain, abundant, and most glorious reward.

It will be acknowledged at once that these remarks apply to the bold and determined manner in which Moses demanded the deliverance of Israel, and persevered in doing so, till he achieved it. But it may be objected that St. Paul in the text, refers more especially to the closing scene of this fearful drama, the actual forsaking of Egypt ; and surely, it may be said, such an act required no faith, for no further wrath was to be dreaded. Pharaoh, as we have just seen, was now imploring Israel to be gone, and his subjects were as urgent as their king. We read in the book of Exodus, that the people "were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry," (Exodus xii. 39). And we are told by the Psalmist that "Egypt was glad at their departing, for they were

“afraid of them,” (Psalm cv. 37. P. B. V.) St. Paul however ascribes this forsaking to faith; and if we look a little deeper than the surface, we may come to be of one mind with him. Notwithstanding the promising appearances to which we have referred, Pharaoh and his people were not willing that Israel should leave their service. They had given permission indeed, they had even added entreaty; but they were acting under the influence of terror, under the immediate pressure of the heavy hand of God. Their conduct under such circumstances, was no guarantee therefore of their real feelings and no security for their future behaviour; Pharaoh had often before, when placed in the same circumstances, granted them permission to depart; but when the danger was over, he had as often revoked his word. Israel was an undisciplined multitude of men, women, and children, broken and dispirited by ages of slavery, and totally unable to fight in their own defence. And if their leader took advantage of this momentary panic and attempted to lead them forth from bondage, he incurred a fearful risk when that panic should subside. Pharaoh would doubtless come down upon them at the head of his disciplined armies, and either lead them back into severer bondage, or fall upon them with the sword. The wise, considerate, and thoughtful Moses must have contemplated the probability of such an issue. And it therefore did require faith on his part to forsake Egypt on that night, even that faith which lifts above the fear of man by assuring us of the protection of the invisible God.

The sequel of the text, to which we now proceed,

will prove at once that these observations are founded in truth.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land : which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.

This signal interposition of God on behalf of His people and for the destruction of His enemies, was brought about by the occurrence of the very circumstance to the probability of which I have just referred. Egypt had scarcely granted to Israel the emancipation which terror had wrung from her, when she repented of her lenity and softness, and sought to repossess herself of her Hebrew slaves. And while as yet these emancipated ones were only beginning to rejoice in their deliverance, and before time had been allowed them to cross the Egyptian border, Pharaoh gathering together his captains, his chariots, and his horsemen, pursued after them to bring them back. Israel, encumbered with their baggage, their women, and their little ones, travelled slowly and were soon overtaken. They were encamping before the Red Sea, having the wilderness behind them and impassable rocks on either hand, when they lifted up their eyes, and behold the Egyptians were upon them. Into what a condition has Moses, by forsaking Egypt, brought the people who followed him ! Whither now can he lead them ? There was no path of escape either on the right hand or the left ; before them were the waters, behind them the incensed Egyptians. And the people themselves, aware of the peril of their circumstances, bitterly remonstrated with

their leader. "Because there were no graves in Egypt" they said, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness...is not this the word that we did tell thee, "saying, let us alone...wherefore hast thou dealt thus "with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" But Moses had forsaken Egypt by faith, and knew that God would not desert him. Staying himself therefore in this hour of trial, on Him in whom he believed, he comforted the dismayed people; "Fear ye not" he said, "the Lord "shall fight for you." And God was faithful to the man who trusted in Him. He opened for him and for the people who followed him, a passage through death and destruction into life, making "the depths of the "sea," in the magnificent language of the prophet, "a "way for the ransomed to pass over," (Isaiah li. 10). "Lift thou up thy rod," He said to Moses, "and stretch "out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the "children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the "midst of the sea." To encourage them moreover to obey this command, and in further assurance of His gracious protection, "the angel of God, which went "before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind "them; and the pillar of the cloud," the symbol of the Divine presence, "came between" them and their oppressors; so that while the darkness of the night lasted, they were safe from molestation. Moses in the meantime, obedient to the word of the Lord, "stretched "out his hand over the sea; and the Lord" remembering His word, "caused the sea to go back by a strong "east-wind," made it dry land, and divided the waters. Nor did Israel shrink in that trying moment. They

followed their leader into the midst of it, walking on "dry ground," having the waters as "a wall unto them" "on their right hand and on their left." But their triumph was not yet complete. The Egyptians, unhumbled by all their past experience, and unconvinced even by this last demonstration of God's favour to His people, presumed to follow them through the divided waters. And they were able to do so, for these waters kept their upright position. But it was only for a time, till the last straggling follower of the camp of Israel had gained the opposite shore. "The sea then returned "to his strength...the Lord overthrew the Egyptians "in the midst of it...the waters covered the chariots, "the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh...there "remained not so much as one of them...and Israel saw "the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." Such was the glorious event of that ever-memorable night and morning, proclaiming God to all generations as the protector of His people and the destroyer of His foes. (Exodus xiv.)

But we must look into it more narrowly, for there is not a more striking example to be found in the Scriptures of God, of the nature, the results, and the glorious reward of faith. Let us contemplate Moses and Israel, as they stood on the brink of the Red Sea, and gazed upon its waters. There was no outward appearance of these waters being divided; and since the world began, such a thing had not been heard. But God had said that it should be so on this occasion; and Moses taking His word as "the evidence of things not seen," lifted up his rod and gave the sign to nature to obey its Creator's

will. And when the sea was divided in obedience to that sign, Moses and Israel taking the same word as their evidence that these watery walls should not fall and drown them as they marched along, and that the slimy bottom of the deep should afford solid ground for their feet to rest on, descended fearlessly into the gulph between. Had we seen them as they did so, had we seen rank after rank of that countless multitude of men, women, and children descending into the depths of the sea, and judged their conduct by human reason, we should have pronounced it the result of madness. It was the result however of something very different,—of faith in God. Never since the world began, had He given such a command to any people; never since the world began, had His name been so signally glorified by any people's obedience. And their reward was proportionate. If we fear to trust the Lord, and feel disposed when in difficulty and trouble, to question the Divine faithfulness, let us contemplate Moses and Israel on the further bank of the Red Sea, with the haughty Pharaoh breathless at their feet, and the dead Egyptians strewed around them. Let us listen to the song of the men, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become "glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath "dashed in pieces the enemy;" let us catch the responsive note of the women, "Sing ye to the Lord, for "He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his "rider hath he thrown into the sea," (Exodus xv. 6, 20, 21). Our hearts peradventure may be animated with the same sacred fire, and we may learn from the contemplation to say with the holy Psalmist, "O Lord

"of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee," (Psalm lxxxiv. 12).

And St. Paul, be it observed, is especially careful to mark this triumph of Israel as the reward of faith; for he adds most emphatically, "which the Egyptians *"essaying to do."* They saw Israel attempt the passage of the sea successfully, and judging that what their despised slaves could do, was competent for them also, they immediately essayed to follow them. They knew not the secret of the Lord, that this passage was the work of faith. But the result of their attempt soon proved it. The sea had rolled back before the people who trusted in its great Creator; its waters had stood as if spell-bound while they marched through; but it owed no such reverence to His unbelieving enemies. It returned therefore to its strength and overthrew them; its waters fell on them, and they "were drowned." We learn thus on the one hand from this solemn and amazing transaction, that salvation is, in God's righteousness, the meet reward of faith; we are warned on the other, that overthrow and ruin are the recompense of presumptuous unbelief.

It is not difficult to discern the object of St. Paul in directing the attention of the Hebrews to these two instances of faith. They were then, as has been already mentioned, exposed to the wrath of man, and the Apostle would prove to them that faith was able to lift the mind above its influence. He has already for this purpose, referred twice to the history of Moses, and now refers to it a third time. There is moreover a climax in his

references. It proved the power of that holy principle that the parents of Moses, in defiance of the edict of the first Pharaoh, should have hid their child. It was a more emphatic proof of it when Moses himself, residing in the court of Egypt and under that monarch's eye, espoused openly and fearlessly the cause of his persecuted brethren. And it was the most emphatic proof of all, when he deliberately returned from Midian, and bearding the lion in his den, delivered the prey from his teeth. But there is something more definite in the first reference of the text. To set his brethren free from bondage, was the object to which Moses directed his energies, and it was for his zeal in the prosecution of that object that he incurred the wrath of the king. The believing Hebrews in like manner, were now being emancipated from the bondage of the law, and were going on to taste the sweets of gospel-liberty. But they were deterred from advancing, and almost forced back into thralldom, by the furious wrath of their unbelieving brethren. St. Paul reminds them therefore that when Moses had set his heart on the deliverance of himself and his people, faith had enabled him to endure patiently the threats and violence of Pharaoh. And if your hearts, he would say, are set as anxiously on spiritual emancipation, the faith which strengthened Moses, will strengthen you also, and no rage of the persecutor shall keep you back from the enjoyment of that liberty "wherewith Christ hath made us free." Speak not, he would add in his second reference, of the difficulties which beset your path; faith has no difficulties, and nothing shall be impossible to it. Think

of your fathers at the Red Sea, and remember how God appeared for them. The same God is your God also; He who made the depths of the sea on that memorable occasion, a way for His ransomed to pass over, promises now that His redeemed ones shall come with singing to Zion. "Who art thou" then, as your own Isaiah addresses you, "that thou shouldest be afraid of a man "that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be "made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" (Isaiah li. 9—13.)

This subject is fitted to teach us also very solemn and important lessons. Egypt, as we learned in the last lecture, is the type of this evil world, and every one who is living in disobedience to God, is at this moment a bond-slave to its king. "In time past," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "ye walked according to "the course of this world, according to the prince of "the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in "the children of disobedience." These words concern us very nearly, for we are all in this evil condition till rescued by the grace of God. We may not flatter ourselves that it cannot be so because we have always been members of God's Church, and our lives have been decent and irreproachable. No one could be possessed of more distinguished religious privileges, no one could be more irreproachable in his life and conversation, than was Saul the persecutor. He was an upright, conscientious, and zealous member of the only Church then existing in the world. "If any other man think-"eth," he tells us, that he may "trust in the flesh, I "more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of

"Israel...an Hebrew of the Hebrews...touching the "righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians iii. 4—6). "My manner of life from my youth," he testifies before Agrippa, "know all the Jews:... "after the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts xxvi. 4, 5.) And he characterizes that life from its commencement, in these remarkable words, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until "this day." (Acts xxiii. 1.) But with what feelings does Paul the servant of Christ look back on this life of blamelessness? Let him be his own witness. He had reminded the once-abandoned Ephesians, as we have just seen, that they had been servants of Satan and children of disobedience, and he proceeds immediately to include himself along with them. "Among "whom also," he says, "WE ALL had our conversation "in times past...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and "of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, "even as others" (Ephesians ii. 2, 3). When the law of God came home to his conscience in its spirituality, breadth, and extent, he made the humbling discovery that he was "carnal, sold under sin." Circumcised Hebrew of the Hebrews as he was, he found that he lacked the circumcision of the heart, and was not a Jew inwardly (Romans ii. 28, 29); distinguished as he had been for moral uprightness and religious zeal, he found that he had been living for himself only; and as one therefore who had sinned and come short of God's glory, he found that he was exposed to wrath. But it pleased God, as he tells us elsewhere (Galatians i. 16), to reveal Christ in his heart. He found in Him deliver-

ance from condemnation, and was by His grace set free from the law of sin and death (Romans vii. 9—14; viii. 1, 2). And the self-righteous Pharisee, transformed thus into the humbled and penitent believer, began to walk at liberty as the servant of Jesus Christ. Now these Scriptures set before us the experience of every one who has been taught in truth to serve the Lord. Some are found originally in the condition of the Ephesians, openly trampling on the commandments of God, and living in all uncleanness. Others, like Saul the persecutor, are distinguished by the blamelessness of their lives, and by their strict observance of all the forms of religion. But the difference is not essential; they are equally far from the spiritual service of God, and differ only in the character of the sin which enslaves them. Both therefore require emancipation by the revelation of Jesus in the heart. But who shall describe its new-creating energy? It constrains the sinner to forsake his lusts; it teaches the moralist to cast away his self-righteous confidences; it presents something better to the outwardly religious than his efficacious forms. There is no parley nor hesitation where that blessed light has shone; all flee for refuge with one consent, to the one hope set before them in the gospel. This is the first step from bondage into liberty, from Egypt toward Canaan; for with this blessed knowledge of the Saviour the service of God begins.

“He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside.”

But we cannot take this step without awakening

against us the wrath of the world's prince; Satan sets himself as determinedly to prevent our spiritual emancipation as the king of Egypt did to prevent the deliverance of Israel. And if we prevail in defiance of him, to burst our bonds and take the road to Canaan, we earn as our recompense, his bitter hatred. The Apocalyptic Seer tells us that he makes war to the end with those "who keep the commandments of God" (Revelation xii. 17); and St. Peter exhorts to vigilance "because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter v. 8). It is not because Satan is changed since these words were written, but because God in His holy providence restrains his fury, that any one is now permitted to serve the Lord in peace. And even as it is, he tries every means to thwart and hinder us in this heavenly path, surrounding us, according to our different conditions and circumstances, with difficulties of every form and name. The ridicule of former associates in evil tries the constancy of one; the influence of carnal relatives is the discouragement of a second; whilst the hopes and prospects of this world, combined with fears of worldly loss and trouble, prove the snare and hindrance of a third. The tempter moreover in taking advantage of these unpropitious outward circumstances, is assisted to a fearful extent by the traitor within the citadel, the sin that is in our own hearts. And the difficulties which obstruct the path of every one who would forsake Egypt and make good his way to Canaan, are in consequence so great, that unless we have that faith which is the spring of perseverance, we

shall find it impossible to proceed. We must learn, with Moses, to stay ourselves on the invisible God; we must believe in His Fatherly love, and look for His continual help. Our way shall then be cleared as we advance; difficulties which seemed insurmountable shall disappear, as the Red Sea parted and gave passage to the children of Israel; and our peace increasing daily even in this world, shall issue at last in the peace of eternity.

But whilst we are not to be discouraged by difficulties on the one hand, the text warns us against presumption on the other. That others have triumphed in circumstances similar to ours, is no proof that we shall do so; if they triumphed, it was because they believed in the Lord. When Pharaoh called on his people to follow Israel into the depths of the sea, he might have said and with apparent reason, These slaves fear nothing, and shall my soldiers tremble? But we know the result; the path which was salvation to the one, proved ruin and destruction to the other. And it is so still; "the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea xiv. 9). While God's believing people are enabled to persevere in His ways, and wax stronger and stronger, those who trust in their own wisdom and ability shall fall in these ways and never rise again. There is salvation and triumph for us, if we believe with Moses; there is overthrow and perdition if we presume with Pharaoh. May the Lord write these lessons on our hearts!

LECTURE XIV.

FAITH'S TRIUMPH IN JOSHUA AND IN RAHAB.

HEBREWS XI. 30, 31.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”

THE three last examples of faith have been taken from the history of Moses and of that generation of Israel which he was appointed to lead. Following the stream of Jewish story, St. Paul now reminds the Hebrews that the same holy principle strengthened the next generation of their fathers, under the conduct of Joshua, to subdue the land of Canaan. For Jericho was the first city of the Canaanites which fell into Israel's hands, and its capture opened the way to the acquisition of the whole country. He also takes advantage of a remarkable circumstance connected with the fall of Jericho, viz. the preservation of Rahab, one of its inhabitants, from destruction, to set before those to whom he was writing another example of that precious faith, to the exercise of which he now sought to stir them up.

This subject when considered in detail, will be found equally full of valuable instruction with those which have preceded it. The fall of Jericho and the preservation of Rahab exhibit in a most striking manner the nature of faith, the results to which it leads, and the reward which, in the faithfulness of God, it cannot fail in the end, to receive. Having considered the subject in this light, and in its peculiar reference to the circumstances of the Hebrews, we shall seek to gather from it lessons of catholic truth.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Having delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, and afterwards guided them for forty years in the wilderness, Moses resigned his charge and his life together on the borders of the promised land. God then raised up Joshua to succeed him. Under his conduct Israel marched through the parted waters of the Jordan, and passed over into the land of their inheritance, "right against Jericho." Jericho was a city of the Jebusites, one of the seven nations whose country had been given to Abraham. Joshua invested it closely, thinking most probably to take it by ordinary warfare. Such however was not the purpose of the Lord. We read that when Israel was by Jericho, a man appeared to their leader with his sword drawn in his hand, and announcing himself as "captain of the host of the Lord," commanded Joshua to loose his shoe from off his foot, for

the place whereon he stood was holy. These intimations declare plainly who this distinguished stranger was. He was the same who sat under the tree with Abraham and suffered him, before they parted, to plead for Sodom, (Genesis xviii.); who permitted Jacob to wrestle with him, and bestowed on that patriarch the name of Israel, (Genesis xxxii. 24—32); who appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in a bush (Exodus iii. 1—6). Well might Joshua ask, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" He who spake to him was **THE SON OF GOD, THE REDEEMER AND KING OF ISRAEL**. Let us next attend to what He said, for it was by faith in His words that the walls of Jericho fell down. His first word was one of large encouragement; "I have given into "thine hand," He said, "Jericho, and the king thereof, "and the mighty men of valour." He then proceeded to give directions. Israel was to compass the city daily, for six days, and seven priests were to bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns. But when the seventh day came, they were to compass the city seven times, and the priests were to blow with the trumpets. "And it shall come to pass," said the Lord, "when "they make a long blast with the rams' horn, and when "ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall "shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city "shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up, "every man straight before him." Joshua believed these words, for as we shall see immediately, he acted on them. How very striking is the example thus afforded, of the true nature of faith! Joshua was now before one of those cities which the spies that went up

with him forty years before, had described as "great "and walled up to heaven," (Numbers xiii. 26—33; Deuteronomy i. 28). He was followed by an army, numerous indeed but unaccustomed to war, for they had only begun to prove the reality of contest with an enemy. The people whose country he had invaded and with whom he had now to contend, were proverbial in that age of the world, both for valour and strength; the report of their stature and prowess had so intimidated the former generation of Israel, that they lost heart on the borders of their inheritance and fell back to die in the wilderness. What had Joshua to set against these things? What assured him that he should be successful in his present attempt? The word of the Captain of the Lord's Host was his assurance; He had spoken and His servant believed. Nor was this all. That word had spoken not of success merely, but of success in a particular way, viz., by compassing the city, blowing with trumpets and shouting. This mode of proceeding, it is needless to say, afforded no human probability of triumph; it mocked human reason, and since the world began, such a thing had not been heard. Joshua therefore had nothing on which to stay his heart, save only the word of God. But that word is "the evidence of things not seen;" Joshua asked no more; he believed that it should be even as God had said to him.

His behaviour proved that this faith was genuine. For six successive days, though no result followed, he marched at the head of Israel round the devoted city; and the priests, as they passed on before the ark, blew

with the trumpets by his command. When the seventh day was come, he compassed it seven times; at the seventh time "when the priests blew with the trumpets," he said, "to the people, Shout;" and Israel participating in their leader's confidence in God, shouted when they heard the word. Such was the result of faith; we see it in this unhesitating, unquestioning, implicit obedience. And its reward also is recorded. "The wall fell down flat,...the people went up,...every man straight before him, and they took the city." The historical records of the Old Testament thus verify the statements of the New. For the book of Joshua tells us, in perfect harmony with the text, that the walls of Jericho fell down before a people who believed God's word. (Joshua v. 13—15; vi.)

This however is not the only example of faith recorded in the text. It proceeds,—

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Rahab the harlot was one of the inhabitants of Jericho. Her story is simple and affecting. It requires no proof that in original character she resembled her abandoned countrymen; but her heart was softened, whilst theirs were hardened to their ruin. She had heard in common with them, that the Lord had dried up the Red Sea before His people, and that He had delivered the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, into their hands. She was aware with them, that Israel came into Canaan as the commissioned messenger

of God's vengeance; and with them also she was filled in consequence, with consternation and fear. But she drew a conclusion from all this which her countrymen failed to draw; "The Lord your God" was her language to the spies of Joshua, "He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." The result of this faith is especially noticed in the text. Believing that these spies were the servants of the one true God, she received them "with peace," lodging them in her house, and carefully concealing them from the eager search of her countrymen. She also sued to them for mercy. "Swear unto me by the Lord," she said, "and give me a true token that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren...and deliver our lives from death." They gave the assurance which she sought, charging her only to bring her father's household to her own dwelling in the day of vengeance, and to bind a line of scarlet thread, the pledge of safety, in the window. And here we have another example of her faith; she believed the word and oath of these servants of the God of Israel, and bound that scarlet thread in her window as soon as she had sent them away. How very different was the spirit manifested by the other inhabitants of Jericho! Though filled with consternation at the approach of their terrible enemy, they "believed not" in Him whose long-provoked vengeance had sent that enemy to destroy them; and so far therefore from humbling themselves and suing for His pardon, they sought to kill His messengers.

The reward which this faith of Rahab received, is also noticed in the text. The day of vengeance came;

Jericho was taken, and her unbelieving people perished. Their doom was indeed most fearful; imagination can picture nothing more terrific than the scene which must have ensued in Jericho when her protecting walls fell flat. The words of the spies to Rahab, "Whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head," remind us of the poet's awfully-descriptive language,—

"Hark to the haste of flying feet
As they splash in the blood of the slippery street!"

It must have been so on that day, within that devoted city. Men, women, and children, as we know from the inspired record, fell by hundreds, nay by thousands, before the avenging sword; the dismayed and affrighted Canaanite sought protection in every corner of his city from the wrath of Israel, but sought it in vain; the shrieks of anguish, horror, and despair waxed louder and louder and louder, and only ceased when there was none to complain, because nothing breathing was left alive. What a blessed contrast to this scene of havoc and desolation was presented, in the mean time, within believing Rahab's dwelling! She was sitting with her parents, her brothers and sisters beside her, and the scarlet thread was bound in the window, the pledge and assurance of safety. She heard doubtless the shrieks of horror in the street below, but in calm reliance on the truth of the God of Israel, she heard them unaffrighted. How rich, how precious was her reward! It was peace in the midst of alarm, preservation in the midst of destruction, life in the midst of death. She

was adopted also by the people who had saved her, and lived for many years in Israel in honour and esteem, partaking largely of God's abundant goodness toward His favoured heritage, the seed of Abraham His friend, (Joshua ii. ; vi. 21—25).

THE train of thought which these references to Jewish history were designed to awaken in the minds of the believing Hebrews, was suited to their circumstances, and calculated to be most profitable. They had set their faces toward the heavenly inheritance, but were sadly hindered on their way. St. Paul has therefore just reminded them; as we saw in the last lecture, of the passage of the Red Sea; proving thereby that faith has no difficulties, that every thing yields to its energy. And he now follows up that reference by reminding them of the capture of Jericho; the same faith, he says, which parted the waters, overthrew the Canaanite before our fathers, and subdued the land of promise. The Hebrews were also instructed by these references, in the necessity of persevering faith. For they could not forget that those very men who had passed the Red Sea, had fainted and turned back when they beheld the cities of Canaan. It is not enough, the Apostle seemed to say, that you overcome one difficulty; you must add conquest to conquest and triumph to triumph, and never think your labour ended till you sit down in peace, under your vine and fig-tree, in the promised inheritance of the Lord. The encompassing of Jericho for seven days before it fell, was designed, let me remark, to impress on them the same lesson.

The number seven in holy Scripture, always denotes completeness. Patience had its complete and perfect work in their fathers, for they complied implicitly with the Divine directions, and waited during six days till the appointed signal was given. And this behaviour was fitted to teach their children "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise," (Hebrews x. 36). Nor was the reference to Rahab without important meaning. Their circumstances resembled hers, for they had received with peace the servants of the true Joshua, the apostles and ministers of Christ. There was also another resemblance; a more fearful destruction than that which overwhelmed Jericho, was at this moment awaiting Jerusalem and Judea. They are therefore reminded of her reward, that in the faithfulness of the God of Israel she was preserved in the day of ruin. And your reward, the Apostle would say, shall be the same; when destruction overwhelms your unbelieving countrymen, a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come nigh you.

BUT the catholic instruction which may be learned from these verses, is far more deserving of our attention than any peculiar application of their contents. The taking of Jericho, like the keeping of the passover, was typical of things to come. The parties principally concerned, viz. Joshua, Israel, and the people of Jericho, were evident and remarkable types. Joshua was a type of Christ. His name indicates this; Jehoshua or Jesus signifies God the Saviour. His office indicates it still

more ; for the work assigned to him was to lead Israel into the earthly Canaan. And Jesus shall in like manner, in the coming day of glory, lead the saints of God, of whom Israel was a type, into the heavenly Canaan, the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The earth which now groans under the oppression of the wicked, shall then like Canaan of old, vomit forth its wicked inhabitants (Leviticus xviii. 24, 28), and shall be given into the hands of Christ and His people that they may possess it for ever. And Jericho of which Joshua said, "It shall be accursed, it and all that are therein ;" of which he said also after its destruction, "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that buildeth it" (Joshua vi. 17, 26); —Jericho is as evidently typical of the wicked nations of this evil world. For they shall receive their doom in the day when the Saviour is revealed, from His hand and from the hand of His saints, being broken as with a rod of iron and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Father has conferred this honour on the Son (Psalm ii. 8, 9), and Christ has promised to associate His people with Him (Revelation ii. 26, 27). "I saw heaven opened" says the Apocalyptic Seer, "and behold a white horse ; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True...The armies which were in heaven followed Him...Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations : and He shall rule them with a rod of iron," (Revelation xix. 11—15). It is no fancy which sees in the destruction of Jericho the type of these awful events ; it is plainly pointed out to us by the circumstances which

attended it. Joshua and Israel, as we have already seen, marched round that devoted city, whilst the priests who accompanied the host blew with the trumpets for seven successive days. No result followed during the first day or the second, during the third or the fourth, during the fifth or the sixth day. And when these trumpet-blasts were heard on the seventh day, during Israel's six successive marches round the city, its inhabitants, secure in their strength, listened to them peradventure with derision. But when they said "peace and safety," "sudden destruction" came. For at the seventh trumpet-blast of that seventh day Israel's leader gave the word; it was answered immediately by the shout of the host which followed him; the protecting walls fell flat, and the miserable inhabitants of Jericho became a prey to the avenging sword. Let us compare with all this what is written in the book of Revelation. The subject-matter of that book is the fall of this wicked world into the hand of Christ for judgment; and the Seer has distinctly marked the prophetical circumstances attending that awful event. It shall take place, he tells us, when seven seals have been opened; when seven trumpets have been blown; when seven thunders have uttered their voices; when seven vials have been poured out. We have at present to do especially with the trumpets. "I saw seven angels," says the Seer, "and to them were given seven trumpets;" "the seven angels," he continues, "prepared themselves to sound." He then declares the effects of their several soundings. The first trumpet-blast affects the earth; the second affects the sea; the third poisons the rivers and fountains

of waters; the fourth darkens the luminaries of heaven. A pause then ensues, and a voice of warning is heard. But judgment quickly recommences; the fifth angel sounds and the bottomless pit is opened; the sixth sounds and four terrible destroyers are loosed. Still however the great city abides in her strength; the earth continues the abode of wickedness, and the prince of this world seems rather to increase his sway. But his time is short: the seventh angel sounds and it is immediately proclaimed aloud—"THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD," (Revelation viii. ix. x. xi). The king also comes down to take them. "The Lord Himself" says St. Paul, "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," (I Thessalonians iv. 16). This "trump of God" is the seventh trumpet of which mention has just been made. And the shout of Christ, when that trumpet is blown, shall be reechoed by the shout of His people. Theirs are the "great voices" which proclaim that the kingdom is come; the "voices" which concur with the thunders of Jehovah, announcing "It is done;" the overwhelming halleluiahs which sound abroad through creation that "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," (Revelation xi. 15; xvi. 17, 18; xix. 1—6). So that the same three things which marked the fall of Jericho, viz. the trumpets, the shout, and the mysterious symbolic seven, shall mark also the day of final reckoning. For "the great trumpet shall be blown," (Isaiah xxvii. 13); Christ and His redeemed ones shall raise the shout of victory, and this wicked world shall fall

under the weight of God's tremendous wrath. There was another circumstance connected with the fall of Jericho, it was never to be rebuilt. It shall be the same with this evil world. "The earth is utterly broken down" says the prophet... "the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again," (Isaiah xxiv. 19, 20). When it was judged by the waters of Noah, its desolation was repaired; men began again to overspread the earth, and human society was reconstituted. But after its judgment by fire, there shall be no second rebuilding. The world indeed shall still continue, and human society shall again enliven the face of the earth, but nothing shall be as it now is; every thing shall be changed. At present, it is "man's day" (I Corinthians iv. 3; original), for man is now lord and ruler of the earth, and his will is its law. But it shall then be "the Lord's day," (Revelation i. 10); Christ shall then be Lord and ruler, and God's will shall be the only law of creation. Wickedness indeed shall again raise its head for a moment, but only that it may be crushed for ever, (Revelation xx. 7—10).

The case of Rahab instructs us in another way. She was a citizen of Jericho, and was in danger of perishing in its overthrow; we are by nature citizens of this evil world, and are in danger of sharing its doom. By receiving the spies however and binding the scarlet thread in her window, Rahab was not only saved from death but was adopted by Joshua and Israel. And we in like manner, may not only be saved from eternal death, but become of the true Israel. The history of

the fall of Jericho contains thus a twofold type. In Rahab's original condition we see what we are by nature, "children of wrath," (Ephesians ii. 3); in Israel of whom she became one, we see what we become by grace, "the household of God," (Ephesians ii. 19).

If we desire then to make this transition, to pass from nature to grace, from condemnation to acceptance, let us follow the example of Rahab, receiving the servants of the true Joshua and binding in our windows the scarlet thread. "We are ambassadors for Christ," says St. Paul; "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (II Corinthians, v. 19, 20.) Such is the character and such the message of the servants of the true Joshua; we must receive this message with joy. And the scarlet thread which they tender, must appear on our dwellings, i.e. the blood of Christ, the substance of apostolic ministry, must sprinkle the conscience and bring peace to the heart. Rahab having done these things, waited for the coming overthrow. She wept doubtless for her miserable country, but her own heart was in peace. At length the preparations were made; Israel passed the Jordan and began to invest the city. Her eye watched them for six successive days, as they compassed it, blowing with the trumpets; she saw them on the seventh day, go round it for six successive times. And if she was instructed in their intentions, what must have been her feelings when she saw them prepare to go round it for the seventh time, when she saw the priests put the

trumpets again to their lips! The wealth of worlds would have been no exchange to her at that instant, for the precious scarlet thread. It becomes us then to put the like value on the precious blood of Jesus, FOR WE ARE AT THIS MOMENT IN RAHAB'S VERY CIRCUMSTANCES. We are yet in this evil world, but are waiting for its overthrow. The Apocalyptic angels have begun to blow, yea, as far as we can gather from the prophetic page, six of their trumpets have been blown already. We are now, I believe, in the condition indicated in the tenth chapter of the Apocalypse: the assurance has gone forth that when the seventh trumpet shall be blown, time shall be no longer, and we know not at what instant its summons may rend the air. Blessed then are those who are indeed of God's adoption through faith in the blood of Jesus, who can indeed say of the true Joshua, "Lo, this is our God;...and He "will save us!" (Isaiah xxv. 9.)

But there is something in this subject which warns us against self-deception. Let us observe the nature of that faith by which Rahab was saved from destruction: it led her to humble herself and to sue for mercy. And this is the character of all true faith. We may see it in the thief on the cross; "Lord, remember me" (Luke xxiii. 42): we may see it in Saul the persecutor; "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts ix. 11). Let us observe also the results of Rahab's faith; she took part with God's Israel against her idolatrous country, for she hid the messengers which Joshua sent. And the results of true faith are still the same. It leads us to take part with God and His people against sinners and their

ways. The indissoluble connection moreover between such faith and such results, is marked in a most striking and beautiful manner by one circumstance in Rahab's story. We are expressly told that she bound the scarlet thread in the very window by which she had let down the spies (Joshua ii. 18, 21). When these spies returned therefore with the victorious army of Joshua, that window with its scarlet memorial would remind them at once of their plighted word and of the kindness which Rahab had shewn to them. It is the same still, and will be so to the end. The heart which confides in God's mercy through the blood of Jesus, will also favour God's cause; and if we can stand in judgment as those who have trusted in the Cross, the Judge will assuredly be able to say to us, "I was an "hungred, and ye gave me meat," (Matthew xxv. 35). What is commonly called faith, will not bear comparison with this. Men believe that there is a great and glorious Being who has created them and on whom they are dependent; they acknowledge also that they have sinned against Him and deserve His wrath. But nothing which they believe about Him leads them to Him as a Father, teaches them to trust in His grace, to surrender their affections to Him, or to forsake their sins at His command. "Thou believest that there is "one God;" says St. James, "thou doest well: the "devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, "O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James ii. 19, 20.) And this testimony is supported by the text. The men of Jericho had this faith; they trembled at the approaching vengeance of the God of

Israel; and yet we are told that they "believed not." Their faith of terror did not save them; they were overwhelmed in ruin. And it is equally powerless to save now.

There is something in this subject, let me observe finally, at once to encourage and to humble. She who was saved in the day of her country's ruin, was "Rahab the harlot." Her case is thus parallel with that of the dying thief, who crying with her "Lord, remember me," was with her answered in God's abundant mercy. Nor does his case stand by itself, in New Testament-Scripture. Corinth, that city of lasciviousness and crime, was filled with thieves, with fornicators and adulterers, but many of these abandoned sinners found mercy in the blood of Jesus. (I Corinthians vi. 9—11.) Let no one therefore despair; we have the assurance at once of the Old Testament and the New, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." (Matthew xii. 31.) It was by faith moreover that Rahab found salvation. And the same door is opened for the vile and abandoned of whom we have just spoken; in casting themselves on God's mercy they shall assuredly find life. But let us remember that there is no other way of safety, no other door of hope. We may not say, our lives have been blameless and irreproachable, we cannot stoop to accept salvation on the same terms with thieves and harlots. If we are blinded by this fatal deceit, those whom we despise shall leave us behind, and press into that inheritance of which we shall eternally come short. Let us remember the warning of our blessed Lord. "The

“publicans and the harlots,” He said to the self-righteous of His day, “go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him,” (Matthew xxi. 31, 32). The Baptist to whom He refers, had preached the forgiveness of sin; but the moral and religious had scornfully refused his message, whilst the reprobate and abandoned had received it. The same message is declared to us, for the word of the Baptist was “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” (Mark i. 1). And if we have been taught by the blessed Spirit to discern the Divine purity, and to discern in contrast with it, our sinful and corrupt condition, we shall not waste the precious time in comparing ourselves with others. Too thankful that the door of mercy by which Rahab and the thief entered is still open, we shall make haste to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. May the Lord in His infinite goodness, teach this humbling lesson to us all!

LECTURE XV.

FAITH'S POWER TO ACHIEVE ALL THINGS.

HEBREWS XI. 32—35.

“ And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae ; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.”

HAVING referred, as we saw in the last lecture, to the conquest of Canaan, St. Paul proceeds now to remind the Hebrews of the great and worthy deeds which had been done by their valiant fathers, in the land thus conquered by their arms. He does not indeed, as in the preceding parts of the chapter, dwell minutely on any particular case ; his reference is general and hasty ; time, he says, would fail him to do otherwise. In this we shall follow his example, contenting ourselves with a general and hasty glance at the history of the believing men whose names are mentioned in these verses. For what is true of the writer of Scripture, is still more true of its expositor. To dwell minutely

on every thing which deserves his attention, would be to spend a life-time in expounding a single book.

The most hasty glance however at the lives and actions of these famous men, is sufficient to reveal faith to us in its true character, unhesitating confidence in God; in its noble result, unshrinking obedience to His will; and in its blessed reward, the abundant fulfilment of His promises. Having gathered this instruction from the text, we shall then consider its application.

BARAK is the first of these worthies in the order of Scripture-narrative. Israel "served the Lord all the "days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that "outlived Joshua." But another generation then arose "which knew not the Lord," and Israel began to mingle with the heathen and to learn their works. They were subjected in consequence, first to the king of Mesopotamia and afterwards to the king of Moab; and when both chastisements had failed to bring them to abiding repentance, they were delivered into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who oppressed them for twenty years. Effectual resistance to this tyrant seemed impossible, for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and he disarmed Israel that they might be helpless in his hands. The Lord however had pity on His heritage. But when His help came, it was to faith and not to sense; He spake a word of promise and command, and that word was by the mouth of a woman. "Hath not "the Lord God of Israel commanded" said Deborah the prophetess to Barak, "Draw toward Mount Tabor, "and take with thee ten thousand men;...and I will draw

“unto thee, to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of
“Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude;
“and I will deliver him into thine hand.” Barak shrunk
at first from the perilous task imposed on him. But
though fearful, he was not unbelieving; he accepted
the reproof of Deborah, and encouraged by her presence,
obeyed God’s word in her mouth. Intelligence of his
having done so was no sooner carried to Sisera than
he came down with the swoop of an eagle, thinking at
once to destroy him. But God’s enemies often calculate
amiss. The faith which had strengthened Barak to
hazard his life and to do the will of God in such trying
circumstances, met in God’s righteousness, with its due
reward. “The Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his
“chariots, and all his host” before Him, so that “Sisera
“fled away on his feet,” and not a man of his vast army
was left to him. And this was only the beginning of
triumphs. Victory followed victory; “the hand of
“Israel prospered, and prevailed” till their heathen op-
pressor was destroyed. Barak is thus an example of
the words before us. “Through faith” he “obtained
“promises,” was “out of weakness made strong, waxed
“valiant in fight,” and “turned to flight the armies of
“the aliens,” (Judges iv. v.)

The case of GIDEON which comes next in order,
resembles in some respects that which we have just
considered. Israel after Barak’s death, began again to
serve strange gods, and were delivered for seven years
into the hand of Midian. Gideon the member of a poor
family in Manasseh, and the least in his father’s house,

was commanded by God to deliver his country from oppression. "Surely I will be with thee" was the word addressed to him, "and thou shalt smite the Midianites "as one man." He would fain, like Barak before him, have declined the perilous honour; for there was no human probability that this promise should be fulfilled. The army of Israel amounted only to two and thirty thousand men; whilst that of their oppressors exceeded an hundred thousand. But the words of the Lord by degrees inspired him with courage, so that he took the field. His trial however was yet to come; the Lord seeing that he had faith, began to put it to the test. Two and twenty thousand men were therefore sent to their homes, and ten thousand only remained with him; and these ten thousand were reduced, in their turn, to three hundred. But Gideon was now insensible to fear. Instructed by the Lord he put an empty pitcher, a lamp and trumpet into the hands of every soldier in his little army, and surrounded the camp of Midian in the middle watch of the night. Surely there is nothing which God commands, which faith will not encourage us to do! Here we have a Jewish peasant strengthened only by the assurance "I WILL BE WITH THEE," surrounding with three hundred men the camp of an armed foe who "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude!" His little band moreover participated in their leader's confidence: at his appointed signal they brake the pitchers, blew the trumpets, held the lamps aloft, and shouted "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Man's faith had now done its uttermost; the rest depended on the Lord. And He was not wanting to those

who confided in Him, "ALL THE HOST RAN, AND
"CRIED, AND FLED." The only task now left to Gideon,
was to give chase to a flying foe; and Israel inspired
with hope by his victory, seconded him vigorously in
the work. Their oppressors were in consequence
destroyed, and forty years of quietness were the reward
of this act of faith. (Judges vi. vii.)

JEPHTHAË, the Gileadite leader, is an example
of the same thing. He also "obtained promises" and
was "made strong" "through faith," so that he "waxed
"valiant in fight" and routed "the armies of the aliens."
Israel having relapsed into idolatry some time after
Gideon's death, were delivered into the hand of the
Ammonites who oppressed them for eighteen years.
Having called on the Lord for aid, the people appointed
Jephthae their captain; and he "uttered all his words
"before the Lord in Mizpeh," i.e. he made confession
of his sin and weakness and implored the help of the
Most High. And this faith did not go unrewarded;
the Spirit of God descended on him, and strengthened
from above, he went forth to meet the foe. That foe
moreover was delivered into his hands; "he smote
"them from Aroer...to Minnith, even twenty cities,
"and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great
"slaughter." And the final subjugation of the Ammon-
ites was the fruit of this faith in God. (Judges x. xi.)

We now come to one more remarkable than any
who preceded him, the illustrious SAMSON. His history
is replete with instruction, and a very full illustration

of the text; we shall therefore dwell on it more at large. Unweaponed and unassisted he "stopped the mouths "of lions;" by the valour of his single arm he overthrew embattled hosts; and having obtained the promise in his lifetime, that he should be Israel's deliverer from oppression, he was made strong out of weakness before his death to bring down signal vengeance on their foes. This superhuman strength, this terrible and resistless valour, this triumphant and glorious success, were moreover the fruit of faith; they were at once the result and the reward of confidence reposed on the Lord. The most hasty glance at his history will prove the truth of this account. While he was yet a youth, "a young lion roared against him" as he passed the vineyards of Timnath; but "the Spirit of the Lord "came mightily upon him," and unarmed and defenceless as he was, "he rent" the savage creature "as he "would have rent a kid." It was not however to war with the beasts of the field that God had raised up Samson. The word had passed upon him before he was conceived in the womb, that he should "begin to "deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines;" for in further chastisement of their repeated idolatries, that heathen people had then dominion over them. An opportunity of fulfilling this ministry, was soon presented to heaven's selected champion. A private quarrel with the Philistines was the occasion, but it was ordered of the Lord; for His Spirit came upon His servant, so that he went down to their city Ashkelon and slew thirty of its people. It would have been a great exploit for any other Israelite to have done such

a deed, singlehanded, in a Philistine city ; for Samson it was nothing. He soon found an opportunity worthy of himself. He had smitten the Philistines “with a “great slaughter,” and the men of Judah alarmed for their own safety, sought to pacify their oppressors by delivering him bound into their hands. But “the Spirit “of the Lord came mightily upon him,” the two new cords with which his arms were fastened, became “as “flax that was burnt with fire,” and his hands dropped powerless. Their terrible captive was thus at liberty, and it was too late for the Philistines to flee. He snatched with his liberated right hand “the new jaw- “bone of an ass,” and with no other weapon of offence he slew a thousand men. And this exploit, amazing as it was, is but a sample of the feats of valour which made Samson for twenty years, at once the terror of the heathen, and the protector and defence of Israel. Nor is it difficult to shew that all this was the fruit of faith. These exploits of Samson are expressly referred to the power of the Spirit of God ; and faith only can avail itself of the strength which descends from above. The termination moreover of Samson’s glorious career, affords mournful testimony to the same thing. God had connected his triumphs with the observance of his Nazarite vow ; but forgetting to whom he was indebted, Samson lightly and presumptuously brake it. He imagined that his strength was his own, and thought that it must needs continue. But in this he was fearfully mistaken ; he had ceased to make the Lord his confidence, and “the Lord departed from him ;” he became as another man. The Philistines were not slow

to avail themselves of this advantage; they "took him, "and put out his eyes," and having bound him with fetters of brass, made him "grind in the prison-house" of Gaza. Ah, when they did these cruel things to him, where was that arm which had slain a thousand men? It hung powerless by his side; its strength had departed with departing faith. The mighty one was now laid low, his glory was turned to shame, the strength of Israel was become weakness, and was the sport of the uncircumcised! Well might we have said if we had seen him in these altered circumstances,—

"Can this be he,
That heroic, that renowned,
Irresistible Samson,
Whom unarmed
No strength of man nor fiercest wild beast could withstand;
Who rent the lion as the lion tears the kid,
Ran on embattled armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself
Made arms ridiculous?"

We have still further evidence moreover, that faith had been the secret of his strength: God did not leave him in the dust. Samson sought His face in the darkness of his heathen prison, and in answer to returning faith, "out of weakness was made strong" once more. The lords of the Philistines, on a day of sacrifice to Dagon, called for their Jewish captive to make sport before them. The house of Dagon "was full of men and "women," and all the nobility of that heathen land were there; there were besides on the roof about three thousand persons, spectators of Samson's shame. But

he, the blind object of their derision, called on the name of the Lord, and laid hold, as he did so, with his right hand and with his left, of the two middle pillars on which the house was resting. We know the sequel;—

“These two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugged, he shook, till down they came and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath—
Lords, ladies, captains, councillors, and priests.”

Thus did the blind and helpless captive of Gaza, transformed by faith once more into the mighty Samson, avenge himself on the Philistines for his two eyes. It was his last exploit: he pulled down on his own head the ruin which overwhelmed them. But he died as he had lived, the destroyer of Israel's enemies through faith in Israel's God. (Judges xiii. xiv. xv. xvi.)

As we follow the course of Scripture-history, we come next to the name of SAMUEL. He was no warrior: he “turned to flight the armies of the aliens” by the power of faith alone. As he was judging Israel in Mizpeh, the Philistines came up against them. The people were afraid and cried to Samuel, and Samuel cried to the Lord. And the Lord in answer to the prayer of His servant, discomfited the Philistines with His thunder out of heaven, so that “they were smitten before Israel.” This victory also quelled the spirit of that heathen nation, for “they came no more into the coast of Israel...all the days of Samuel.” And it was commemorated as the victory of faith: “Samuel

“took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, “and called it” the stone of help, “saying, Hitherto “hath the Lord helped us.” This happened, let me observe, not long after the death of Samson. God thus shewed to Israel that it mattered nothing to her safety whether that mighty one or the peaceful Samuel was her judge; that as long as there was faith to confide in Him, and a true heart to call upon His name, so long He would surely be found the Strength and Defence of His people. But if we would see the text exemplified in this man of God we must look at him in another aspect. St. Paul says of this believing company that they “wrought righteousness.” This was eminently true of Samuel: nothing evil is recorded of him; from childhood to grey hairs he did God’s will. His life as Judge in Israel especially, is one bright and glorious display of righteousness. Let us hear his own account of it, rendered in his old age to the tribes of Israel when they were assembled before the Lord. “Witness “against me,” was his solemn protestation, “whose ox “have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom “have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of “whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine “eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.” The people gladly and cheerfully bore testimony, “Thou “hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast “thou taken ought of any man’s hand.” And Samuel said, “The Lord is witness;” and they answered, “He “is witness.” It requires no proof that this righteousness was the fruit of faith. We have seen this already in Enoch and Noah; in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;

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all righteousness since the fall, has been the fruit of faith only. (I Samuel vii. 3—17; xii. 1—5.)

We come next to the name of DAVID. The history of this illustrious man exemplifies almost every thing recorded in the text. We find him at one time, "out of weakness made strong," waxing "valiant in fight," and turning "to flight the armies of the aliens;" at another, escaping the edge of the sword and obtaining promises; and at another still, subduing kingdoms and working righteousness. A character is stamped moreover on these exploits, successes, and triumphs, which marks them as the fruit of faith. Let us take a rapid glance at his glorious career: it will furnish us with an illustration of every particular now mentioned concerning him. David was a youth of three and twenty years, when he went out to meet the veteran Goliath. The gigantic Philistine was clad in armour, a shield was borne before him, and the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. His juvenile adversary was attired as a shepherd-boy, and had no weapon of offence save only a stone and sling. But his hope was in the Lord; "I come to thee," he said to the Philistine, "in the name of the Lord hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Nor was this confidence unrepented: a stone of the brook slung by the hand of faith, gave Goliath "his death's-wound." And youthful conqueror, taking advantage of the discomfiture occasioned by their champion's fall, overthrew the Philistines and chased them to the gates of their

cities. (I Samuel xth 18) But all human glory and triumph has also its ^{2^d} *loy*. Saul the king of Israel had, before this time, been virtually deprived of his kingdom, for God had told him by Samuel that He would set up another in his room. Samuel had also secretly anointed David, and the shepherd-youth had already the promise of the kingdom. The joy of Israel on the occasion of his achievement, suggested this thought to Saul, and he eyed him in consequence, with murderous jealousy "from that day and forward." It soon broke forth in open violence, and David saved himself only by flight. But "jealousy is cruel as the "grave;" Saul chased him for seven long years, like a partridge on the mountains. It seemed impossible at last that David should escape any longer from the sleepless and untiring malice which thirsted for his blood. He was brought so low that he sought shelter, first with the Moabites and then with the Philistines; nay, he was brought lower still, for his own soldiers "spake of stoning him." But though tried as with fire, his faith never failed him; "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" he said, "and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet "praise Him." (Psalm xliii. 5.) And this faith received its due reward. He was preserved by Him in whom he believed, from daily-impending destruction; "Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand." And besides thus escaping the edge of Saul's sword, he obtained at length the promise of his vacant throne. Saul went down into

battle and perished, and Dáfall, became king of Israel. (I Samuel xix. to xxxi.; II Samuel i. to v. 3.) He now turned his arms as Captain of the Lord's people against Syria, against Moab, against Ammon, Amalek, and Edom, and subdued these kingdoms in succession. And it was faith and not ambition which strengthened him for these exploits. He was guided in his warlike enterprises by the counsel and direction of God's oracle; he also dedicated to the Lord the spoils of the vanquished nations, acknowledging that to His all-powerful blessing he owed his great name and his extended sway. God Himself reminded him of this. "I took thee from "the sheep cote," He said, "and I was with thee "whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all "thine enemies,...and have made thee a great name." (II Samuel vii. 8, 9.) Solomon also devoutly acknowledged that "the Lord put" the enemies of his father "under the soles of His feet." (I Kings v. 3.) And besides subduing the kingdoms of his neighbours, David "wrought righteousness" among the people entrusted to his own care. He wrought it toward God by destroying idolatry and making provision for His holy worship, he wrought it toward man by causing judgment and justice to be executed in the land. We have also a mournful proof, as in the case of Samson, that this righteousness was the fruit of faith. The man after God's own heart, shewed before the close of his career, that he was capable when left alone, of committing the foulest wickedness. He coveted and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and then sought to cover his shame by slaying the dis-

honoured husband with the sword of the children of Ammon! We cannot contemplate this grievous exhibition without reading in it the truth of the text; if David at other times was found working righteousness, it was surely not of David but of the grace of God which was with him. (II Samuel xi.; I Corinthians xv. 10.)

We come next to THE PROPHETS, the final reference of the text. St. Paul mentions no names, but the careful reader of Scripture will at once discover that ELIJAH, ELISHA, and DANIEL were especially in his eye. For he speaks of quenching the violence of fire and of women receiving their dead again; miraculous circumstances which are not recorded, save during the ministries of these famous men of God. Their histories are an illustration also of other things referred to in the text. Let us glance at them in succession.

David and Solomon were in due time gathered to their fathers, and the ten tribes of Israel, breaking off from the kingdom of Judah, made Jeroboam the son of Nebat, king. His history and that of the monarchs who succeeded him, is a tale of sin, violence, and blood. After the destruction of his house and of that of Baasha which came after it, Omri was exalted to the throne. Ahab his son "did worse than all that were before him;" not satisfied with the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, he introduced openly the worship of Baal. In this time of fearful apostacy God raised up ELIJAH. His work was to shut up the

heavens that there should be no rain upon apostate Israel, to slay the priests of Baal, and to warn an idolatrous king and people of the coming judgments of the Lord. He set his face like a flint to these appointed tasks, and braved, in doing so, the vengeance both of prince and people; he did not fear the wrath of man, and sought only to do the will of God. In all this we meet with the text, "who through faith, wrought "righteousness;" for the will of God is righteousness. We find him also obtaining through faith the fulfilment of the promise of miraculous sustenance, first from the bills of the ravens at the brook Cherith, and then from the hands of the Gentile widow. We find him, on more than one occasion, escaping the edge of the sword. Ahab was so enraged because of the dearth that he sought him through all the neighbouring kingdoms, and Jezebel did her utmost to avenge her slaughtered priests; but Jehovah hid His servant. We find him made strong out of weakness; the Lord sent an angel to feed him in the wilderness, and he "went in the strength of that meat forty days and "forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." And finally, we meet with the circumstance which is especially recorded in the text. The Lord having struck with death the son of his Gentile hostess, Elijah took the dead child out of her bosom and cried to God on his behalf. His faith prevailed; the child revived in his arms, and he was able to say to the joyful mother, "See, thy son liveth." (I Kings xvii. to xxi.)

ELISHA was the disciple of Elijah. His ministry is chiefly remarkable from his obtaining the promise

of a double portion of his master's spirit. It was distinguished in consequence, by signs and wonders such as no servant of God had exhibited before him; nor did any exhibit them after him till Christ Himself appeared. He commanded nature, for he parted the Jordan with his mantle and healed the waters of Jericho; he also healed the poisonous pottage, and multiplied the widow's oil. He restored from the loathsome leprosy and from the cold embrace of death. The case of Naaman the Syrian remains on record, in memorial of the one achievement; whilst the prophet's Shunammite hostess receiving from his hand her dead son raised to life again, illustrates the text and exemplifies the other. And that mighty power of God to heal and save, which was exercised by Elisha living, lingered even round his cold remains. We read that some time after he had been dead and buried, a company of mourners disturbed in their funeral solemnities, cast a dead man into his sepulchre, and that when the lifeless body "touched the bones of Elisha," the man "revived, and stood up on his feet." What a signal honour did God thus put on faith WHEN HE GAVE TO HIS DEAD SERVANT THE POWER OF DESTROYING DEATH! (II Kings ii. to ix.; xiii. 20, 21.)

But notwithstanding the miraculous ministry and the warnings of these watchmen of Ephraim, the ten tribes of Israel went deeper into apostacy, and were at length carried by the Assyrians into a captivity from which they have not yet returned. And their brethren of Judah taking no heed to avoid their sins, were, about an hundred and sixty years afterwards, carried

captive to Babylon. Among these children of the captivity was DANIEL found, and with him were associated SHADRACH, MESHACH, and ABEDNEGO. These four were banded together in holy friendship; they had understanding together of the secret things of God; they were witnesses together for His holy name in a land of sin and idolatry. They also found favour in the eyes of the Chaldean despot, and were promoted together over the province of Babylon. But this tranquillity was not to last. It pleased Nebuchadnezzar to set up an image of gold, and to command all his subjects to fall down and worship it, on pain of being cast into a burning fiery furnace. Daniel's three friends refused to obey this mandate. "Our God whom we serve" they said, "is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Here we have faith in its true character, confidence in God; we have also its necessary result, determination not to disobey Him. And this faith was put to the proof, it was literally tried with fire. The despot's cruel threatening was executed, they were cast into the burning flame. But confidence in a faithful God received its due reward, it "quenched the violence of the fire." The Redeemer Himself vouchsafed His presence with them and commanded that terrible element not to harm His people. "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire," was the exclamation of the astonished king, "and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like THE SON OF GOD." They came forth in his sight and in the sight of his princes and

counsellors, and an hair of their heads was not found singed, "neither were their coats changed, nor the "smell of fire had passed on them." So that their persecutor himself acknowledged the wondrous power of faith; "God hath sent His angel" he said, "and "delivered His servants that trusted in Him." We have another illustration of the text in the eventful history of Daniel. Darius the Mede had taken the kingdom of Babylon, and at the instigation of Daniel's enemies, had issued a decree that whosoever should pray to any save only to himself, should be cast into the den of lions. Daniel deliberately disobeyed this royal mandate; he had faith in God and could not cease to worship Him. This faith was put to the proof; he was cast into the den, and abode with its savage tenants for the space of a whole night. But it received its due recompense; it stopped the lions' mouths, and he came forth unharmed in the morning. "My God" he said to the king, "hath shut the lions' "mouths, that they have not hurt me;" and Darius echoing the confession, published through all his kingdom that the God in whom Daniel believed, had delivered him "from the power of the lions." Two of Babylon's heathen monarchs became thus the astonished witnesses of the power and excellency of faith. (Daniel i. to iii. vi.)

WE learn from the glorious things which this subject has brought under our consideration, that there is nothing which faith cannot do. It can command the elements of nature, quenching the fire and parting

the waters; it can command also the savage tenants of the wilderness, taming or rending them at its will. It can contend successfully with the most fearful odds, strengthening one against a thousand and enabling two to put ten thousand to flight. It can surmount the most appalling difficulties; it can protect from the most imminent dangers; it can enable for the most trying circumstances; it can obtain the most unlikely promises. There is indeed nothing, I repeat, which it cannot do; it can even raise the dead. "IF THOU CANST BELIEVE," said our Lord Jesus, "ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM THAT BELIEVETH." (Mark ix. 23.) Oh what consolation must this have ministered to the tossed, troubled, and afflicted Hebrews! Difficulties of every kind were now surrounding them; but the lesson of this glorious Scripture was "Fear not, believe only;" "Who art thou, oh great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." (Zechariah iv. 7.) And though we are not struggling with their difficulties, it is full of consolation for us also. Faith can obtain whatever God has promised. He cannot deny Himself, and all things therefore are attainable, yea are certain of being attained by the man who believes His word. The same faith will enable us to triumph over the devil, to overcome the world, and to contend successfully against every spiritual adversary. It will bring us also safe at last to that inheritance from which it has taught us to look.

And there is another lesson which we may learn from this precious Scripture. There is a tendency in human nature to self-confidence as well as to despon-

dency. Were we placed in the position of Barak, Gideon, Jephthae, Samson, or David; were we commanded, as they were, to subdue powerful kingdoms and to overthrow hosts of warlike enemies, we should readily acknowledge that we were unequal to the task. Were we sentenced with the brethren of Daniel, to be cast into a fiery furnace, or with Daniel himself, into a den of lions, we should readily acknowledge that we had no hope of coming forth unharmed. We should therefore make haste, in such circumstances, to lay hold on the help of the Lord. But many of us see no call for doing so, that we may be enabled to serve God and to obtain His promise of salvation. And yet St. Paul in the text, enumerates all these together, recording them alike as the fruit of faith in God. To work righteousness and to obtain promises is then as truly beyond the strength of unaided nature, as it is to quench the violence of fire or to stop the lion's mouth. We were baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, to teach us this humbling lesson. The promises of Divine mercy can be obtained, and our obligations to Divine love discharged, by the grace of God's Spirit only. Let us open our hearts then to the blessed Comforter, that teaching us now to know the Lord, and guiding our feet in His holy paths, He may bring us at last to His heavenly kingdom. We shall thus keep the narrow way, neither falling into despondency on the one hand, nor into presumption on the other. Christ has warned us that few find this way. (Matthew vii. 14.) Let us therefore strive to find it; its end is everlasting life.

LECTURE XVI.

FAITH'S POWER TO SUFFER ALL THINGS.

HEBREWS XI. 35—38.

“ And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

THE Hebrews have just been reminded of the great things which faith has done: they are reminded now of the fearful sufferings which it has been able to endure. And these sufferings teach the same lesson with the noble deeds referred to in the last lecture. They exhibit faith in its true character, confidence in the Divine promises; and point to its unfailing result, cheerful compliance with His will.

And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.



The circumstance here alluded to, is recorded, not in Scripture-history but in the second book of Maccabees. It stamps no canonical authority on that document that St. Paul should thus refer to it; it proves merely that he considered it to contain a true account of events which had happened in Israel. After the last of their inspired prophets had delivered his message, and the canon of Scripture was closed, there arose a king over Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes by name, who wasted God's heritage and inflicted the most dreadful sufferings on His people, endeavouring by the force of torture to make them forsake the God of their fathers and violate His law. A widow and her seven sons, were brought before him and commanded to eat swine's flesh. They refused and were tortured for their refusal. Steel and fire were the instruments of that torture, and were employed against them in every way in which these dreadful agents can afflict the human frame. We saw in the last lecture, that faith can quench the violence of fire. But it can also, if such is God's will, enable us to endure that violence. He was glorified in the former of these ways, in the brethren of Daniel who were seen in the midst of the fire, without harm: He was glorified in the latter, in this widow and her seven sons, who were seen in the midst of fiery torments, remaining faithful still. The circumstance mentioned in the text, renders their constancy more remarkable. They might have had deliverance if they would have accepted it at the price of disobedience to God. The tyrant pressed on one of them in particular, the offer not of escape from torture merely, but of wealth,

honour, and power. But the noble youth refused the gilded bait, and his six brothers displayed equal constancy. And their widowed mother, having seen her seven sons sink successively under the violence of the fire, yielded herself a willing victim and died along with them.

The text declares that this heroism was the result of faith: these sufferers refused to accept "deliverance, "that they might obtain a better resurrection." It has been made a question what St. Paul means by these words, but if we compare them with those immediately preceding, there seems no difficulty. He has just told us that the dead children of the widow of Zarephath and of the Shunammite lady, obtained a resurrection to life from the hands of Elijah and Elisha. And he now means to tell us that this widow and her sons looked for a resurrection better than theirs, a resurrection not to this present mortal life revived, but to that life over which death has no more power for ever. We have already seen that the Divine promise of resurrection from the grave and eternal life, was an object of faith to the fathers of old; and it was handed down from them through the successive generations of their children. The Pharisees maintained it in the days of Christ and His apostles, against the infidel and lascivious Sadducees (Acts xxiii. 6—8); and St. Paul declared it before Agrippa, as the hope of the whole Hebrew nation. (Acts xxvi. 6—8.) It need not therefore surprise us to find these sufferers animated with this hope: they had learnt it, in common with the rest of their nation, from Moses and the prophets.

their tragical and heroic death looked at in this light, presents faith to us, according to St. Paul's definition, "the substance of things hoped for." That must have imparted a substantial character indeed to the virtue, which gave strength to endure such extremity of present torment. It presents faith to us also in its genuine results. We see them acquiescing in the divine will; cheerfully consenting, since He was not eased to deliver them, to glorify Him in suffering, torture, and death.

The text proceeds:—

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourges, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword.

If we examined the details of the dreadful persecution to which reference has now been made, we could doubtless find much to which the words before us might be understood as relating. Mocking and scourging, bonds and imprisonment, the bruising stones and murderous sword, were freely employed by Antiochus in his rage against the Jews; and God's faithful ones "were tempted" by means of these horrible severities, to forsake the profession of His name. But there is no occasion to go into these details; for though the first part of the text proves that St. Paul had that persecution in his eye, his words must not be understood as referring to it only. There is enough in the history of apostate Israel and backsliding Judah in days long

prior to those of the Syrian king, to furnish us, alas, with abundant illustration of the text. Elijah complained to the Lord in his day, "The children of Israel "have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, "and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I "only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." (I Kings xix. 10.) The inspired penman, writing in the days of the Babylonish captivity, characterizes the conduct of Judah in almost the same terms. "They "mocked the messengers of God" he says, "and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the "wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there "was no remedy," (II Chronicles xxxvi. 16). And our blessed Lord Himself gives fearful corroboration to this testimony. His language is full at once of severity and of tenderness; and both the severity and the tenderness tell the same mournful tale. "It cannot be" He exclaims with indignation, "that a prophet perish out "of Jerusalem." And then filled with that Divine pity which made Him weep over her coming calamities, "O "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He continues, "which killest "the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto "thee; how often would I have gathered thy children "together,...and ye would not!" (Luke xiii. 33, 34.) So truly was this the character of Israel and Judah that those who bore God's message to them, became proverbial in after ages for the sufferings through which they passed. "Take, my brethren, the prophets" says St. James, "who have spoken in the name of the Lord, "for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience: "behold, we count them happy which endure," (James

v. 10). Let us just glance then at the history of these evil days in so far as it elucidates the particulars mentioned in the text.

The histories of the prophets Elisha and Jeremiah furnish us with examples of "cruel mockings." As Elisha was returning from the rapture of his master and on his way to Bethel, "there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." The venom of impious contempt of God was in this mockery. Elijah had just gone up to heaven in a chariot and horses of fire, and it is only too plain that these ungodly children meant to say, follow your master, you baldhead, go up to heaven after him. But surely, it may be said, such a man as Elisha was not to be moved by the mockery of children! This is not the way to look at the matter; we speak in childhood, as we are accustomed to hear. God's glorious act in taking Elijah to Himself must therefore have been a subject of jest in the homes of these unhappy children. They must have heard their fathers and mothers say, That prophet with the hairy mantle has gone, it seems, to heaven at last; we can well spare him, and could spare the baldhead who waited on him; may he soon follow his master! This is the explanation of their greeting Elisha as they did; and what a picture does it present to us of the spiritual state of the families of the covenant-people! And the picture is not overcharged; we read that the prophet turned round and cursed these profane little ones, and that "there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty

"and two" of them in pieces. (II Kings ii. 23, 24.) Had their language been the mere expression of the thoughtlessness and folly of childhood, it would not have been thus visited, for God is not causelessly severe. But it was the expression of the ungodliness of a people who despised both Him and His servants. A man like Elisha dwelling among such a people, must have been subjected daily to contempt and derision; we are to regard the incident to which we have just referred, only as a sample of an experience which was continual. We may take another example of it. When he sent one of his disciples to anoint Jehu king over Israel, the captains of the host asked their comrade, "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" (II Kings ix. 11.) For this, alas, was the language of profane scorn in which his degenerate people spake of the servants of their God. Nor was this experience confined to Elisha: Jeremiah who prophesied two hundred years after him, in the declining days of Judah, is an example of the same thing. "I am in derision daily," is his complaint, "every one mocketh me." And again, "The word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily," (Jeremiah xx. 7, 8). And again in still stronger language, "Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their music," (Lamentations iii. 63). This servant of God felt also most keenly the cruelty of these mockings. "Cursed be the day" he exclaims in passionate grief, "wherein I was born :...cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee...Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (Jeremiah xx. 14, 15, 18.)

This prophet had experience also of the next thing recorded in the text, of "scourgings, yea moreover, of "bonds and imprisonment." "Pashur the son of Immer "the priest, who was also chief governor in the house "of the Lord," was so provoked by Jeremiah's faithful testimony that he "smote" him, "and put him in the "stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which "was by the house of the Lord," (Jeremiah xx. 1, 2). And this shameful treatment from the man who sat in the seat of Moses and of Samuel, was only the first taste to Jeremiah, of the bitter cup. God's final judgment overtook His people shortly after this, for the king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and took it. And the princes of Judah, while the enemy lay round their walls, regarding God's faithful servant as the author of his country's calamities, cast him into a dungeon, letting him down with cords. "And in the dungeon there was "no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire." He would certainly have died in that dreary and noisome place, had not one of the king's eunuchs interceded for him and drawn him out. Though delivered however from the dungeon he was not set free, but remained in prison "until the day that Jerusalem was taken." The heathen Chaldeans then enlarged him, and by their kindness and gentle treatment, made him forget for a season, the cruelty of his own brethren. (Jeremiah xxxviii. xxxix.)

It was indeed for a season only, if Jewish tradition be correct. It relates the martyrdom of Jeremiah, telling us that he was stoned by his countrymen in Egypt, because he testified against their sins. We

have thus in him a further exemplification of the text, "they were stoned." And Scripture-history so far bears out this tradition. It relates the treacherous murder of the Chaldean governor of Palestine, and tells us that the remnant of the Jews sought safety in consequence, in Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. It relates also how boldly and fearlessly he spake God's word to them in that land, and how grievously his faithfulness offended them. (Jeremiah xli. to xliv.) But to pass from Jeremiah, Scripture-history has recorded a martyrdom by stoning in the days of Joash king of Judah. The king and his people had forsaken the God of their fathers, and prophet after prophet had testified against the wickedness in vain. "The Spirit of God "came" at length on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, so that he "stood above the people" and solemnly warned them of impending judgment. But "they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the "commandment of the king," and "in the court of the "house of the Lord," (II Chronicles xxiv. 17—22). Alas for David's house, that it should have been thus apostate ! for the house of the Lord, that it should have been thus profaned !

The text proceeds, "They were sawn asunder." Immemorial tradition tells us that the prophet Isaiah, who sings so sweetly of Messiah's advent and of the glories of the New Testament-Church and of the kingdom, perished by this cruel death, by command of Manasseh king of Judah. The barbarous deed was worthy of the doer, of whom it is recorded with fearful emphasis that he "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood;

"which the Lord would not pardon," (II Kings xxiv. 3, 4). These words refer doubtless in part to God's illustrious prophet. His heavenly strains are to this hour, the comfort and refreshment of the Church; his blood was indeed the blood of innocence, and might well cry to heaven for vengeance.

Slaying with the sword, is another of the severities of the text. We have an example of this also in the days of Jehoiakim king of Judah. There was a servant of God, Urijah by name, who prophesied against that monarch and his people, "according to all the words of "Jeremiah." He fled into Egypt, when he had done so; but Jehoiakim sent after him, and took him and "slew "him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the "graves of the common people," (Jeremiah xxvi. 20—23). And we must remember that every case now cited, is only one among a multitude. When such monarchs as Manasseh and Jehoiakim sat on the throne of Judah, and the throne of Israel was occupied by kings like Ahab, who, aided by Jezebel his right hand of mischief, cut off the prophets of the Lord, it must have been so, in very deed. Many, too many to be reckoned up, must in these evil days, have been mocked and scourged, bound and imprisoned; many, in testifying against the wickedness which prevailed, must have been stoned for their faithful testimony, sawn asunder and slain with the sword. God's faithful servants, in the successive generations of Israel's history, "were "tempted" by means of these severities, to forsake the profession of His name. But they were tempted in vain; He still reserved to Himself a seed. Their innocent

blood cried meanwhile to heaven for vengeance. And God at length hearkening to its cry, led the ten tribes of Israel captive to Assyria, and laid waste Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

The text however enters yet further into detail, for it says of these righteous men,—

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

The bare reading of these words brings the undaunted Elijah before us. His mark in Israel, was the hairy garment (II Kings i. 7, 8); and many of kindred feelings with that man of God, must have been similarly apparelled in those days of persecution and violence. They were “destitute” of means to procure more fitting raiment; “they wandered about,” because they had no certain dwelling-place; they were “afflicted” and “tormented,” for they were chased like a partridge on the mountains. “The world was not worthy” of their goodness; it knew not its inestimable worth. None of the ceiled houses of Israel were counted worthy to afford a shelter to Elijah’s honoured head: nor were any of their possessors privileged to minister to Elijah’s wants. God bade him shelter himself by the brook Cherith, and sent the ravens to him with bread and flesh; He assisted him to flee into the wilderness, and sent an angel to supply him with food. His servant, in the

strength of that meat, walked for forty days and nights, not to the dwelling of some friendly Israelite, but to Horeb the mount of God; and when "he came thither, "a cave" was the lodging which received him, (I Kings xix. 1—9). And it was with his fellows as with himself. When the idolatrous and bloody Jezebel "cut "off the prophets of the Lord," Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and "hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed "them with bread and water," (I Kings xviii. 4). It is needless to proceed further. These historical details of the Old Testament abundantly illustrate the text.

St. Paul ascribes these heroical endurances to faith. We have already learnt that faith is "the evidence of "things not seen" and "the substance of things hoped "for." And we are therefore to understand by this apostolic statement, that consciousness of the Divine presence, the consciousness of Moses when he saw Him who is invisible, was the sacred principle which strengthened these sainted men. It was under its holy influence that they submitted patiently to this mockery, scourging, and imprisonment; that they consented to be thus stoned and sawn asunder. We must also understand by it that they looked for the glory which is yet to be revealed. For the hope of obtaining "a better resurrection" was not confined to the widow and her seven sons; it was common to all these noble sufferers, yea, it was deeply engraven on their hearts. And it reconciled them, as we learn from the text, to suffering, shame and death; it comforted and cheered them when they were driven from human society and wandered without other shelter than the cave and mountain-side.

Old Testament-Scripture in this particular, abundantly corroborates St. Paul. Let us take Jeremiah for an example. When God sent him to plead with His apostate people, He encouraged him not to fear, for "I have made thee" He said, "a defenced city, and "an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole "land;...they shall fight against thee; but they shall "not prevail against thee." And this defence of iron and brass was simply His promised presence; "I AM "WITH THEE, saith the Lord, to deliver thee," (Jeremiah i. 17—19). Jeremiah accordingly, when ready to faint in the midst of abounding sorrow, when complaining of the defaming of many, and that fear was on every side, fell back on this assurance in the peaceful confidence of faith. "THE LORD IS WITH ME," he said; "my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall "not prevail." And conscious only of the protection of the Invisible, and assured of its continuance, his afflicted spirit forgot its sorrows and poured itself forth in praise. "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord," are his words: "for He hath delivered the soul of the "poor from the hand of evil-doers." (Jeremiah xx. 10—13.) We remark in this language the genuine character of faith. The prophet was surrounded with enemies and in mortal peril every hour. But God had promised to deliver him; and faith confiding in the Divine veracity, speaks of that deliverance as if it were already vouchsafed. And if Jeremiah be an example of faith as "the evidence of things not seen," we find it in Isaiah, as "the substance of things hoped for." The promise of "a better resurrection," of a life over

which death hath no power, is revealed with the utmost plainness, in the pages of his inspired prophecy. He tells us of the glorious day when death shall be swallowed up in victory; and then addressing the Church in the person of Messiah, he continues, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust" (Isaiah xxv. 8; xxvi. 19). How marvellous are these words! Christ Himself and His apostles have hardly spoken with greater clearness. We are reminded of the Saviour's declaration, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John xi. 25); and of the kindred declaration of St. Paul, "If Jesus died and rose again, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (I Thessalonians iv. 14.) We also remark again the genuine character of faith. The spirit of prophecy in the man of God overleaps intervening ages, and addresses the sleeping Church as if the counsel of God were accomplished and the time of awaking were come. Isaiah is equally distinct in his prophecy of the glories of that life to which the just shall thus awake. "Behold, a King," he tells us, "shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment...The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them...An highway shall be there,...and it shall be called The way of holiness...The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy." (Isaiah xxxii. 1; xxxv. 1, 8, 10.) He tells us also concerning this "King of kings" (Revelation xix. 16), that "His name shall be called...the Prince of Peace;" that "righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of

“His reins;” that under His holy government “they shall not hurt nor destroy...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah ix. 6; xi. 5—9.) He prophesied these things for the consolation of the Church in his day and to the end of time. We cannot possibly doubt then that they comforted his own heart. Jeremiah was favoured with a vision of them in sleep, while the army of the Chaldees was lying round Jerusalem, and—the glorious future swallowing up the dismal present—“I awaked, and beheld;” he says, “and my sleep was sweet unto me.” (Jeremiah xxxi. 26.) It was surely the same with Isaiah in the evil days of Ahaz, and in the yet more evil days of Manasseh. He was constrained to complain of Judah, “Will ye weary my God also?” But he knew that a day was coming when God should be wearied no longer, when the Root of Jesse should stand for an ensign of the people, and “His rest” should be glorious. (Isaiah vii. 13; xi. 10.) He saw altars built for all the host of heaven, innocent children burnt in the fire to Molech, carved images set up in the house of God, and Judah and Jerusalem seduced, till they exceeded even the heathen Canaanites in idolatry and crime. (II Kings xxi. 1—9.) But he knew that a day was coming when this wickedness should cease to exist; when God should no longer be dishonoured, when man should no longer be destroyed. He might have escaped the torturing saw, if he would have yielded to the current of his evil times and forgotten his obligations to God. But he rather chose to yield his body to that agony, to pour forth his life and

to be numbered with the dead, because he believed that he should see God's goodness "in the land of the living" (Psalms xxvii. 13), when the tenants of the dust should at His bidding, "awake and sing." And as it was with these two holy prophets, so it must have been with Elisha, Zechariah, and Urijah; and with those also who in the days of cruel Ahab, found their dreary shelter in dens and caves of the earth. Believing that the Lord was with them, and looking for the recompense of His reward, they cheerfully endured for His sake, everything which malice could inflict.

THESE hallowed reminiscences were admirably calculated to sustain and comfort the hearts of the now afflicted Hebrews. They brought before them the worthies of their own nation contending with trials similar to their own, and triumphing over them by faith in God. They reminded them that the God of Abraham had been faithful to those who of old had endured for His sake; they gave the blessed assurance that He would be faithful to them also and would not suffer them to be tempted above that which they were able to bear. They reminded them moreover that in thus enduring, they had fellowship with the spirits of the just made perfect, suffering in that holy cause in which heaven-honoured Elijah had toiled and travailed, for which Isaiah and Jeremiah had shed their blood. Their enemies accused them of having forsaken the God of Abraham, and assigned that as the reason of their persecution. But the Apostle reminded them that the very opposite was the truth; that the spirit

which now persecuted the faithful disciples of Jesus, was the same which had inflicted these evil things on the prophets and righteous men that were before them. (Matthew v. 12.)

This subject is full of instruction for us also. It teaches in the first place, as was already remarked, that as there is nothing on the one hand which faith cannot do, so there is nothing on the other which it is not able to endure. It can bear to be houseless, homeless, friendless; it can consent to hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness; it can welcome shame and stripes, darkness and a dungeon. It can surrender what is dearest and most precious to nature: the mother, under its holy influence, could encourage her seven sons to the stake. It can embrace that at which nature shrinks the most: it enabled the same mother to look on her children's blackened ashes, and to yield herself, after them, to the fire. How fearful were the sufferings to which the words before us refer! And the fire, the stones, the steel, their dreadful instruments, were plied with the untiring zeal and cordial energy of hellish malice. But they were plied in vain: God's faithful ones believed and suffered. Take courage then against Satan, ye who now believe in the same holy name. If his utmost malice were let loose this moment, as your day is, your strength should be: he may as soon prevail against God as against the people who trust in God. The most distant glimpse of the glories of that day when the dead saints shall rise with their risen Head, when the now unconscious tenants of the dust shall awake and sing, is sufficient and more than sufficient to make

all present affliction be disregarded. Oh that such faith were ours! Oh that our hearts were lifted by its holy influence above the perishing trifles of time, and filled with these Divine realities! We should be taught by it, in the present life, to act for God or suffer in His cause, according as His wisdom might appoint; we should be prepared, in the life to come, to join that company of faithful ones who surround the throne above.

This precious Scripture teaches us in the second place, that what is esteemed of God is not therefore esteemed of man. We are forbidden to cast our pearls before swine, because they know not their value, and will "trample them under their feet" (Matthew vii. 6). Man has ever acted thus towards God's pearls, His precious saints; he has trampled them under his feet, not knowing their inestimable worth. The statements of the text are the proof of this heavy charge. Let no one therefore deceive himself: the spirit, temper, and behaviour which is stamped with the approbation of God, and secures for its possessor the esteem of those who fear God, will not necessarily secure the approbation of man. The circumcised in heart, as St. Paul assures us elsewhere, have "praise, not of men, "but of God." (Romans ii. 29.) This, I am aware, is not pleasing doctrine. It is more pleasing to hear virtue eulogized, to be told that its beauty attracts all eyes, and wins the regard of every heart. But the question with the faithful Christian is not what pleases, but what is according to God's word. "If perfect "virtue were to appear on earth," was the eloquent

declaration of a learned divine, "all men would fall down and worship it." "Perfect virtue once appeared on earth," was the solemn reply of another, "and men crucified it." And the Cross to which this appeal was made, testifies that he spoke the truth. Let us choose then whom we will serve. He who determines that at all hazards he will keep the world's favour, more than runs the risk of losing the favour of God. But he who determines on the other hand, that at whatever loss or sacrifice, he will abide God's faithful servant, shall obtain that favour and have it as his portion for ever. May the latter choice be that of every one of us! It is the choice of wisdom. And we may rest assured that we shall think so, when we look back on this world from the eternity which soon shall follow it.

LECTURE XVII.

FAITH'S REWARD IN THE PAST.

HEBREWS XI. 39, 40.

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

THE contents of this wonderful chapter are summed up by the Apostle, in the pregnant words before us. He has been reminding the Hebrews of the deeds and sufferings of God's believing people, from the days of Abel down almost to the first advent of the Saviour; and he now reminds them that though these worthies “obtained a good report,” they did not receive the promised reward of glory. He assigns also a reason for this dealing on the part of God. Something better than was revealed in their days, was provided, he says, for this last dispensation of the world; and until that better thing should come, and we who should enjoy it, were ready to partake with them, their consummated felicity was necessarily delayed.

In entering on the consideration of this Scripture, I feel constrained to pause. Its contents are so varied

that I know not where to begin; they are so magnificent that I despair of being able to set them forth aright; they are so large and rich and full, that when I have begun, I shall not know where to end. May God grant to us His heavenly teaching, that we may comprehend something of their meaning!

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

These words teach us plainly that God has annexed a twofold reward to faith, a good report now, and eternal glory hereafter. The righteous men to whom reference has just been made, have obtained as we have already seen, the former part of this reward; but St. Paul here declares that the latter yet waits to be conferred.

To obtain a good report, is to be well spoken of. Whose good report then did these men of God obtain? By whom were they well spoken of? This point was considered before, and a brief reference to it now will suffice. They did not obtain the approbation of mankind in general. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (I Kings xviii. 17) was the question of Ahab to Elijah; "This man is worthy to die" (Jeremiah xxvi. 11; xxxviii. 4), was the sentence of the princes on Jeremiah. This was indeed compensated in part by the affection and esteem of the righteous, both for their persons and their memories. The name of martyred Abel was doubtless held in honour by every succeeding generation of those who feared God; Enoch and Noah could not fail to possess the reverential affection of their cotemporaries

among the just, and the esteem of those who came after them. It must have been the same with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Joseph, Moses, and Joshua, with Samuel and David, with Elijah and Daniel, whilst they dwelt upon the earth. And their memories were held in honour by succeeding generations among God's people; nay they have come down with honour even to our own days. Is this then the "good report" of the text? Is this the present reward which God has annexed to faith? No, the meaning of the text is deeper; faith has a better reward than the good report of the holiest of mankind. It has the good report of Christ and the approbation of the Most High. I appeal in proof of this statement, to the apostolic discourse before us. The names, deeds, and sufferings of the worthies to whom it refers, are all recorded with honour in the page of inspiration. We are told of the faith of Abraham, of the self-sacrificing devotedness of Moses, of the piety of Samuel, of the zeal of David, and of the holy boldness of Elijah. And CHRIST is the writer of this record; it is HIS GOOD REPORT OF HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS. This then is faith's present reward. For the good report which these righteous men obtained, is the heritage of all who believe. The canon of Scripture is indeed closed, and our names cannot be entered there. But every faithful servant of Christ has at this moment his memorial on high; his deeds and sufferings for God and righteousness are remembered and recorded above. "Him will I confess," is the promise of Jesus, "before my Father which is in heaven;" and again, "the Son of Man shall confess him before the an-

"gels of God." (Matthew x. 32; Luke xii. 8.) Heaven's golden harps are silent, cherubim and seraphim are mute, and God the Father bends from His throne to listen. Oh what an encouragement is this to confess the Saviour on earth! We are oppressed, as we do so, by a sense of sin and a consciousness of miserable shortcoming; but let us not despond; the eye of Jesus is upon us, and He is now confessing us on high. The fulness of this glorious reward moreover is yet to come. When Christ shall take His seat as Judge, He shall confess the names of His people before assembled worlds, owning them as His friends and brethren; He shall also cause their enemies to come and worship before their feet and to know that He has loved them. (Revelation iii. 5, 9.) The blessedness of those whom He commends shall then also be made to appear. He shall say to them in that day of glory, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (Matthew xxv. 31, 34.)

This leads us to consider the second part of faith's reward, the glory yet to be revealed which God has promised to His people. For approbation and recompense are indissolubly connected in the dealings of the Most High. A king appoints his son, the heir of his kingdom, to be the leader of his armies against the enemy. The sovereign's banner is unfurled, and every patriot flocks to it. But the service is arduous; there are laborious marches and hardly-contested fields; and those who would approve themselves, must not grudge their limbs, their blood, nay their lives in their country's cause. The prince sends home his despatches as the

campaign proceeds, making honourable mention of as many as distinguish themselves in the war. This is the present reward of these gallant soldiers; they are well-reported of to their sovereign, their fame is spread abroad, their names are mentioned with honour in their native country. But it is not their only reward. The war, after a time, is ended and the army returns home. Promotion, advancement, and wealth, with titles of honour and distinction, are then freely bestowed on merit. And it is the cheering hope of this consummation, in a country saved through his perils and blood, which reconciles the patriot-soldier to the fatigues and dangers of war. Privation, wounds, and hunger are cheerfully submitted to; difficulties are encountered with the daily chance of death: one thought of home and the rewards of a grateful country, makes all these evils be forgotten. Now this illustration from earthly things, though necessarily feeble, sets forth the truth of heavenly things. Christ the Son of God is the Captain of the host of His Father, and those who serve God are His soldiers. "Thou therefore endure hardness," writes St. Paul to Timothy, "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (II Timothy ii. 3.) The enemy is the devil; and under his banner of unrighteousness, bad angels and wicked men are ranged. Between these two leaders and their armies there has been war ever since Adam fell in Eden, and will be till the end come; the field has been long and fiercely contested, and is fiercely contested still. Christ meanwhile, as this Scripture tells us, has had many gallant soldiers. There have been many in every age, who, putting on

"the breastplate of righteousness," and "taking the "shield of faith,...the helmet of salvation, and the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians vi. 14—17), have faced danger and death in His cause without shrinking, have "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," have contended valiantly against Satan while they lived, and yielded up the contest only with their breath. They have already a reward, for their record is on high, their names, deeds, and sufferings are confessed above, their fame has been heard in heaven their native land. But they have another reward in prospect, when this long-protracted war is over and blessed peace returns. Their victorious Prince shall then lead home His army, and remember in His royal munificence, His faithful soldiers. The promotion and honour which comes from above, the dignities and glories of the eternal kingdom, shall recompense then the toils and labours of earth ; time's transitory sufferings shall be forgotten in the fulness of everlasting bliss.

Let us consider this subject more particularly. The final reward which God had promised to His people, and to which reference is made in the words before us, is the "better resurrection" which came under our notice in the last lecture. We learn from Isaiah, that this was the hope of the Old Testament-Church, for he addresses the dead saints in the spirit of prophecy, bidding them "awake and sing ;" we learn from St. Paul, that it is the hope of believers now. For he not only tells us that this mortal must put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, but filled with the blessed contemplation, bursts forth in

rapture, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where "is thy victory?" (I Corinthians xv. 55.) And both Isaiah and St. John declare that this resurrection shall be not to life only but to glory. Isaiah speaks of "the "Lord of hosts" reigning "in Mount Zion and before "His elders gloriously" (Isaiah xxiv. 23; Septuagint Version); and St. John declares that he beheld the enthroned Saviour with His enthroned elders sitting round Him. (Revelation iv. 4; xxii. 5; v. 10.) He also declares expressly that those who have served God on earth, "shall reign for ever and ever;" he records their song of triumphant expectation, "We shall reign on "the earth;" he ascribes in their name and his own, eternal glory "unto Him who...hath made us kings "and priests unto God and His Father." (Revelation i. 5, 6.) These then are the rewards of glory which God has promised to the just. They shall be exalted with that Prince under whose banner they have fought, and for whom many of them have shed their blood. They shall abide with Him as His friends in the royal city; and when "the government shall be upon His "shoulder" (Isaiah ix. 6), He shall entrust them as His confidential ministers, with the affairs of His boundless empire. Yea, they shall be set over the provinces of that empire, and be privileged to bless God's creatures by the exercise of righteous rule. And finally, they shall be channels of communication, as priests with the risen Christ, between the Almighty Father and the world which has been redeemed by the Son. Such is the honour which comes from God, such is the crown of glory which wisdom shall deliver to

her children. (Proverbs iv. 9.) Noah, Abraham, Moses and their fellows lived and laboured for this blessed hope; but they died without receiving it and have not yet received it.

Why have they not received it? Why is their felicity delayed? This question is answered in the words which follow:—

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

These words have occasioned very great difficulty, and there have been many conjectures as to their real meaning. It is surprising that this difficulty should exist; St. Paul evidently means to tell us that our privileges are greater than those of Old Testament-believers, and that until these greater privileges had been really conferred, the consummated felicity of the whole Church was necessarily delayed. And a very moderate acquaintance with the gospel is surely sufficient to explain the meaning of this statement. In the days of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, the expiation of sin and destruction of death were mercies promised but not accomplished; these saints looked forward to them in hope. These mercies are accomplished now in the cross and resurrection of Jesus; we look back on them and give thanks to God. This is the “some better thing” which Divine goodness has “provided for us,” on whom the ends of the world are come. And the perfection of the Old Testament-saints was necessarily delayed till this better thing was given. During their

earthly pilgrimage, they were not made perfect even "as pertaining to the conscience"; nay until they heard in the disembodied state, of Christ's finished work, there was still a lingering hindrance to their perfected rest in God. And if the revelation of the better thing was needful even for that perfecting, how much more to their consummated felicity, to their being exalted to the rewards of glory! For these rewards required a body to enjoy them, as was shewn in the translation of Enoch and Elijah; a spirit could not be a king and priest to God. Resurrection therefore was necessary before they could be conferred, for the bodies of these saints were under the common sentence, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But there could be no resurrection till death was abolished; death could not be abolished till the Saviour should rise; and the Saviour could not rise till He had expiated sin by His Cross. Nor was this all. The promise given to these believing men was that they should be glorified with Messiah. And this promise necessarily implied that He should be glorified first; it were a contradiction to speak of His elders reigning in Mount Zion, before He Himself had assumed the royal seat. For these reasons of state then in the breast of the King of kings, the perfection was delayed till the better thing was revealed. Its revelation has perfected with us, the spirits of these just men; that accomplished sacrifice which is our peace on earth, is their peace also in the presence of God. It has also provided that they and we shall yet be perfected together; for it has expiated sin, it has abolished death, it has exalted the Saviour

to His Father's throne. Nothing therefore now remains but that He should accomplish the number of His elect and bring in His promised kingdom. The saved shall then be gathered to Him in one body, and in one body shall be glorified; righteous Abel and the last son of Adam who has been brought home to God, shall be seen together in resurrection-blessedness.

We are instructed by the words which we are now considering, how to think and speak of the cross and the kingdom of the Saviour. There is much misapprehension on this deeply-important subject. Many persons speak as if the cross were the perfect thing, and tell us that those who believe in it, pass through death immediately into consummated felicity. Let us bring this opinion to the test of the text. It calls the cross the "better thing." And it is so. It is better than the blood of bulls and goats and all the ceremonies of legal worship; they could not pacify the conscience, they could not cleanse the heart, they never could have taught us to call God our Father. But it is not the perfect thing; for *that*, as the language of the text implies, the saints of former dispensations with the departed saints of the present, are yet waiting in the bosom of God. When His name is hallowed, when His will is done on earth as now it is done in heaven, when Jesus reigns as King and the enemy is for ever crushed, then, and not till then, **THE PERFECT THING** is come; then, and not till then, the felicity of His people is consummated. We have abundant scriptural testimony to this most obvious truth. St. Peter tells us that "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

we are begotten again to the living hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The Father has promised this inheritance both to Christ and His people; but neither He nor they are as yet put in possession, for its revelation is deferred, as the Apostle adds expressly, till "the last time," (I Peter i. 3—5). St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, teaches the same doctrine. He says that the Holy Ghost "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory," (Ephesians i. 14). The gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of Christ's passion, the blessed result of the "better thing" which God has provided for us. But we are told in the words just quoted that it is the pledge of something better still, even of the perfection. For the Apostle declares that it is "the earnest" of the eternal "inheritance," till Christ shall redeem out of the hand of the devil that world which He has "purchased" with His blood, and take it as His kingdom, as a "possession" for Himself and His people for ever. The language of St. John also throws great light on this matter, for he places the two, the better and the perfect thing, in contrast with each other. "We are now," he says, "the sons of God; ...and when He shall appear, we shall be like Him," (I John iii. 2). Whilst we prize the cross then, and rejoice greatly in the blood which there was shed, and look with adoring thankfulness to Him who hung thereon, let us never think or speak as if the cross were all. It was the Saviour's path to glory, the glory in which He shall yet be revealed; let us therefore expect

that revelation, let us look for Him as the crowned King. For this blessed hope God's oppressed creation waits, and all nature languishes till He appear.

When shall He appear then? When shall the righteous now abiding in His bosom, be made perfect in felicity by the resurrection of their bodies from the grave? On this point the text is silent. One thing however is implied in its statements. This glorious consummation may be brought in at any time; no great event now intervenes to hinder it. It was quite otherwise under earlier dispensations. If we had asked Isaiah whether in fulfilment of his glorious prophecies, the son of David might be expected soon to assume the royal seat, the prophet would have answered, He has not yet come to make atonement for sin; His coming as the crowned King must therefore be far away. The language of St. Peter is a most striking corroboration of this statement. He tells us that Isaiah and his fellows searched "what, or what manner of time the " Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when " it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and " the glory that should follow." He tells us also that in reply to this anxious investigation, "it was revealed" to them, "that not unto themselves, but unto us they " did minister the things, which are now reported" in the gospel, (I Peter i. 10—12). These holy men understood then that sufferings were to precede the glory. They understood also that another generation of the Church should yet arise, more privileged than they had been, and that the sufferings of which they were discoursing, should minister to those who should

thus come after them, a peace and consolation which they themselves had never known. This is evidently the "better thing" of the text, and they foresaw its revelation before the perfect thing could come. But we cannot now put anything between us and the glorious final consummation. God's kingdom shall come when the number of His elect is accomplished, and none of us can tell the hour. We know this only, that it shall come as a snare upon a thoughtless world, and the wise in heart shall be prepared. "Therefore, my beloved "brethren," says St. Paul, when he has set forth to the Corinthians and to us the glories of this final consummation, "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding "in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that "your labour is not in vain in the Lord," (I Corinthians xv. 58). It is not in vain indeed, if it shall be repaid with such Divine munificence, if "this mortal shall put "on immortality," and "this corruptible, incorruption," at His gracious and omnipotent word. Let us labour then as those who are animated by such a hope; it is our preparation for our expected Lord and Saviour.

THE considerations suggested by this subject were well suited, I need not remark, to the circumstances of those to whom St. Paul was writing. They have just been reminded by him of the deeds and sufferings of their fathers; they are reminded now that those who behaved so nobly and suffered so patiently, were possessed of privileges far inferior to theirs. We have a better assurance of God's love, he says, for Messiah has now come; a better pledge of His faithfulness, for that

advent is the fulfilment of promises given since the world began ; a better standing before Him, for the veil is rent and we are now the sons of God ; a better consolation, for we have a risen and ascended Mediator. They are now in the bosom of God, he adds, waiting for their consummation in bliss, when we and they shall be glorified together. Let us not faint then in our day of adversity, lest we be ashamed to look them in the face in the coming day of the Lord. For they fainted not in their time of trouble, but nobly persevered to the end.

All this applies equally to us. Let us be stirred up then to follow the footsteps of these righteous men, treading after them the narrow way which leads to eternal life. Satan may remind us of their lives of trial, and of the deaths of agony and shame which were the lot of some of them ; but let us be reminded by St. Paul of the abundant reward which has made all these things be forgotten. They have obtained God's good report, and are now cherishing in His bosom, the sure and blessed hope of everlasting glory. We have already seen that the true Christian is Christ's enrolled and enlisted soldier. Now there is nothing so dear to the soldier's heart as the good report of his general, nor is any thing so animating as the hope of that advancement which follows it. It makes him despise danger and brave death in their most appalling forms, he seeks

" The bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth."

Are we then Christians indeed ? If we are, we shall have this heart in us, Christ's good report and the honour

which comes from Him shall be esteemed more precious than all the world beside. Such reputation is no bubble; blessed for ever and ever is the man whom He commends; undying is that man's honour, imperishable is his reward. But alas, there is a fearful lack of this spirit of devoted obedience to the Captain of the host of the Lord; and the children of this world in their generation, are the reproach of the children of light. We read of Isaiah being sawn asunder, of Jeremiah being stoned, of Urijah being slain with the sword; and surely they must have grudged, we say, to have submitted to such sufferings, and to have been made the victims of such cruel tyranny. Is such a thought worthy of the soldiers of Jesus Christ? Should we esteem him a true-hearted soldier who should speak thus of the loss of his limbs, or of the death of any of his kindred, in the sacred cause of his king and native land. Let us suppose that we had met some British captain returning from that great victory, which in the early part of this eventful century destroyed the gigantic oppressor of the nations and delivered Europe from twenty years of misery. Let us suppose that we had congratulated him on being present at that glorious triumph of our arms, and that he had answered us only with unmanly lamentations over a limb which he had lost in the encounter! We should have listened with contempt. Is this a time, we should have asked, when nations are holding jubilee, for you to lament over your losses? You are a dastard, unworthy of a soldier's name, unworthy to have lost a limb in such a field. And such language would have expressed the truth. The only care of the gallant soldier is not to turn his

back to the foe ; he esteems his wounds his distinction, and is contented, if he fall, to die a soldier's death and to be buried in a soldier's grave. This is most strikingly expressed in the language which the great poet of human nature puts into the mouth of a father, when tidings are brought to him that his son has fallen. " Had he " his hurts before," is the parent's only question ; and on being answered, " aye, on the front," he exclaims with passionate energy,—

" Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
I could not wish them to a fairer death."

Now this is the spirit which animates the good soldier of Jesus Christ, and which animated also the righteous men of whom we have spoken. When they were scourged and bound and imprisoned, they not only did not grudge these sufferings, but accounted every scar an honourable distinction ; and when they died by cruel hands, they gave thanks to God that it was their privilege to fall on the field of glory. Their deaths were therefore precious in His sight ; their very dust is dear to Him, and shall, at His omnipotent bidding, yet awake and sing.

And if the good soldier does not grudge at any time, either his limbs or his life in his country's cause, far less does he grudge them when victory has crowned its arms. The consciousness that he has borne a part in the triumphs of a day of glory, makes all his pains be forgotten, and swells even the bosom of the dying with rapturous joy. This is brought strikingly before us in the poet's description of the expiring warrior,—

“ With dying hand above his head
He shook the fragment of his blade,
And shouted, Victory ! ”

This also was the case with these men of God. It was not “in the lost battle” that their blood was spilt. Assurance of final triumph was, on the contrary, their continual encouragement; they had the consolation of knowing that each one was bearing a part in the discomfiture of the common enemy; and when they fell, it was on the field of conscious victory. I need not remark that this is the case still. There can be no doubt of the final issue of the contest between God and Satan; Jesus must yet be victorious. Meanwhile we who follow this heavenly “leader and commander” are, each of us, bearing a part in hastening on this glorious consummation. Every duty done in obedience to Jesus, every pang endured for His name, contributes in its proportion, great or small, towards the final discomfiture of the common enemy. And he who acts or suffers in this holy cause, has the assurance now of the approbation of Christ, and the promise, another day, of the honours of the kingdom of God. Let us awake then and devote ourselves to the cause of our God and King. Those who know not His name, may esteem it enthusiasm thus to speak; but they are words of truth and soberness. And when the discoveries of eternity shall burst upon us, revealing the glory of the Saviour, and the greatness of the deliverance which He shall then have achieved for creation, from the grasp of the liar and murderer, their truth and sobriety shall be made abundantly manifest. No one shall then look back and

say, I have served Christ too faithfully ; he whose life has been the longest and the most entirely devoted to His cause, shall rather wish that his earthly course could come again, that he might serve Him as His love had deserved. But our present opportunities of service shall not return. May we therefore have grace, whilst they are continued with us, that we may use them for His glory !

LECTURE XVIII.

FAITH'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE PRESENT.

HEBREWS XII. 1.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

HAVING brought to a conclusion the heart-stirring discourse of the preceding chapter, St. Paul proceeds in the words which we have just read, to make practical application of its topics. But these words as they stand in our translation, do not convey the intensity of his meaning; there is indeed no meaning in the statement—“seeing we also are compassed about.” If this apostolic sentence however is literally rendered from the original, the effect is very different. It will then read—

Wherefore LET US ALSO, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, run with patience the race that is set before us.

Nothing can be more evident than the meaning of these words; nor can any thing be more forcible than the exhortation which they contain. I have exhibited to you, the Apostle would say, the examples of God's servants from righteous Abel down almost to the advent of the Saviour, and have reminded you how patiently they both laboured and suffered for His sake. But I have not done so, merely to excite your admiration. Their faith, heroism, and constancy are indeed to be admired; but we must do more than admire them, we must follow their steps; for we as well as they, have a God to serve, a race to run, and a crown of glory to win. Let this therefore be the lesson of their example, "let us also run with patience the race that is set before us."

We shall consider this subject in detail. Let us direct our attention, in the first place, to the encouragement which we derive, in running this heavenly race, from the "cloud of witnesses" which compass us about. This will lead us to inquire in the second place, how this race is to be run; what is the meaning of "laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us;" and why we have need of patience. And these things duly considered, will remind us in the third place, who has set this glorious race before us.

I. The word witness has two distinct meanings. It signifies a witness-bearer; it signifies also a spectator. "I will give power unto my two witnesses" is the word of God by St. John; thou "hast professed a good profession before many witnesses," is the word ad-

dressed to Timothy by St. Paul. (Revelation xi. 3; I Timothy vi. 12.) It is necessary to mark this that we may understand the words before us. For if the "cloud of witnesses" here mentioned, be taken simply to mean spectators, this apostolic sentence is deprived of the richness and fulness of its import. I have no hesitation in affixing both meanings to the word, and will now illustrate both.

Those here called "a cloud" are the saints and servants of God, belonging to all preceding dispensations; such of them at least, as the Apostle has just referred to. The expression indicates their number; they are "so great a cloud," that "time would fail me" says St. Paul, to recount their noble deeds (Hebrews xi. 32); and the name "witnesses" declares their character. They bore, in life and in death, in joy and in sorrow, in prosperity and in adversity, one uniform, consistent, and unvarying witness for God's name. For the encouragement of those who should come after them, they testified with one voice what their histories still testify, viz. that they had made trial of Him and of His service, and that they had found Him a loving, gracious and faithful Master. St. Paul is now exhorting the Hebrews to put their trust in the Lord, and to devote themselves to His blessed service, doing or bearing His will, as He in His wisdom might appoint. Nothing therefore could be more apposite than reference to this cloud of witnesses, to the glorious testimony which their fathers had borne on behalf of that faithful Master for whom he was claiming their confidence and obedience. Some one asks us to entrust our temporal

concerns to his management ; but we hesitate, because we suspect his integrity. He refers us therefore to all who have had dealings with him ; let them, he says, bear witness for me. We accept his reference ; and those to whom he has referred us, testify in his favour with one voice. They tell us that they have had much experience of him, and that they have found him, in every variety of circumstances, a man of probity and honour ; they assure us that if we put our trust in him, we shall never repent having done so. We find in this testimony, the very satisfaction which we seek ; our suspicion is gone, and we distrust the object of it no more. Now the heart that is in us all by nature, hesitates to trust in God. The Hebrews were thus hesitating ; the long continuance of their trials had made them almost stand in doubt of His faithfulness, and they were beginning to repine at their sufferings for His sake. St. Paul says therefore in the text, **BEHOLD GOD'S WITNESSES !** Go to Abel, Enoch, and Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Joseph, Moses, and Joshua, to Samuel and David, to Elijah, Elisha, and Daniel, to Isaiah and Jeremiah ; go and ask them **WHETHER GOD MAY BE TRUSTED OR NOT ?** Their lives, their deaths, their recorded testimony answer this appeal, whether made in the days of the Hebrews or in our own times. Noah, alone preserved alive when a world was drowned ; Abraham, who out of the course of nature, received the child of promise ; Joseph, exalted from the dungeon to be lord of Egypt,—bear witness that God is true. Moses, who was strengthened to brave the wrath of Pharaoh, to lead Israel forth

from Egypt, and to conduct them in safety to the borders of the promised land; Joshua, to whom it was given to smite the Canaanite, and to plant God's people in their inheritance,—could appeal to the experience of the countless multitude which followed them, that not one “good thing” had failed of all which the Lord had spoken. (Joshua xxiii. 14.) Those gallant men who by faith in His name, triumphed over the armies of the aliens, bear the same witness for His truth. Elijah, embracing willingly for His sake, destitution and continual affliction; Jeremiah, consenting to shame and imprisonment while living, and at last, to a cruel death; Isaiah, submitting to be sawn asunder,—testify the same thing. He interposed not indeed to save them from these sufferings, but He was with them in the furnace, and more than recompensed their sorrow, pain, and shame. These are God's witnesses; they speak to us from the tomb; and their testimony is that of personal experience. What then is the sum of this testimony? It is that God never said a word which the event did not justify as true, that He never made a promise which He did not also keep, that He never bade them rely on Him and gave them cause to regret that reliance. And this is the testimony not of one or two, but of **A MULTITUDE, A CLOUD, yea so GREAT A CLOUD** of witnesses.

The references of the preceding chapter, extending as they do, from the time of Cain the fratricide to that of the persecuting Syrian king, from the days of righteous Abel to those of the widow and her seven sons, comprise a period of nearly four thousand years.

What a testimony have we in this to the unchanging character of fallen and apostate man! What a consoling proof of the unchangeable faithfulness of God! **MAN** has been, from age to age, the enemy of truth and righteousness; but his malice has been in vain, for **THE LORD** has been the dwelling-place of His people from one generation to another. (Psalm xc. 1.) We have also in these references, combined with the name here given to the saints referred to, a remarkable proof of the truth of what was stated already, viz. that **FAITH** is not our faithfulness to God, but confidence in His faithfulness to us. It would be mere tautology to say that by faithfulness to God Noah prepared his ark, and Abraham left Chaldea; it would be a statement absolutely without meaning, that by the same faithfulness Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, and Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones. If faith moreover be another name for faithfulness, in what sense are these holy men God's witnesses? For what do they bear testimony? But if on the other hand, it signifies confidence in the Divine faithfulness, the Apostle's language is natural and easy of understanding. We see at once how Noah, confiding in God's protection, hazarded his life to prepare the ark at His bidding; how Abraham, relying on His merciful guidance, went forth from his native land, "not knowing whither he went;" how Isaac, assured of the truth of God's revelations, declared to his sons what should befall their posterity; how Joseph, persuaded that God would keep His promises, commanded that his bones should be carried up and buried in Canaan. And by this

faith they have become God's witnesses, witnesses to His truth and faithfulness. A most beautiful illustration of what I now mean to convey, occurs in the gospel-narrative. "A certain nobleman" came from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee, and besought the Saviour to go down with him and heal his son. Jesus simply said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." But it was enough for him to whom it was addressed, he "believed the word" that Jesus had spoken, and he went his way." What a touching example of the beautiful simplicity of faith! And let us mark the reward of this unquestioning believer. Before he reached his home he found that his child was restored, nay that the fever had left him even while Jesus was speaking, (John iv. 43—53). Such experience would qualify him to be a witness for Christ's truth. If any one had come after him, seeking the same mercy, and on receiving the same command and assurance from the Saviour, had hesitated to believe and obey it, this nobleman could have said, you need not hesitate, I relied on His word and found it true. Now this was the faith and this also is the testimony of the "cloud of witnesses" with which we are encompassed. They bid us believe God's word and trust in His eternal promises: we believed and trusted, they say, and we were not put to shame.

BUT the whole structure of this inspired sentence, shews us plainly that the word "witnesses" here, also means spectators. St. Paul is evidently referring to the spectators at the Olympic games, for the whole imagery of the text is borrowed from these famous

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diversions. The foot-race was one of them. The runner divested himself of "every weight, laying aside" even his garments, that his person might be light and unencumbered; he required "patience," because the race was long; he was rewarded with a crown, if he was the first to reach the goal. There were also many spectators of his running. Thousands of the best and noblest of Greece, raised high on scaffolding, overhung the course, and contemplated with intensest interest the progress of the race. The genius, the valour, the wisdom of that classic land were there. And often, when the wearied runner was just sinking through exhaustion, he gathered fresh encouragement from the interested eyes which were bent on him, made fresh exertions, and was successful in the end. All this must have been well known to the Hebrews, for of all the diversions of civilized antiquity the Olympic games were the most famous, and Herod the Great had introduced them at Cesarea. Nothing therefore can be more felicitous than the reference of the text. I have spoken to you, he would say, of the saints of former dispensations, from righteous Abel down almost to the coming of the Saviour. They are now in God's bosom, raised high in glory above the world and all sublunary things. Still they have not forgotten this earth and its concerns. It was once the scene of their temptations and trials, the place of their joys and sorrows; and they therefore regard it now with the intensest interest. They once ran the race which is now appointed to us, and won it; on us therefore they are now looking down. And they observe the progress of the race, who is foremost and who lags

behind, who sinks exhausted and who runs patiently on. Let us look up then, my brethren, St. Paul would say, and be encouraged; the eyes of heaven's best and noblest are now looking down on us from above. Those who thus watch us as we run, are aware moreover of our difficulty, sufferings, and toil. Abel has not forgotten his martyrdom; Enoch and Noah still remember the taunts and mockery of a wicked world; their trials in this vale of tears have not faded from the memory of Abraham, of Isaac, or of Jacob. Moses still remembers how he shrunk from proceeding into Egypt at God's command; Joshua still looks back on his consternation and dismay when Israel fled before the men of Ai, (Joshua vii. 4—9). Nor have the prophets and faithful men of old, forgotten that they were stoned and sawn asunder, that they were tempted and slain with the sword; they remember still how often they fainted in the day of calamity, and would have been turned out of God's way altogether, but for His help ministered in their hour of need. It is not therefore as careless spectators that they watch us now. When they see us encounter any difficulty, who can tell their interest? When they see us overcome by it, even for a season, who can express their sympathy, their sorrow? When they see us surmount it and run patiently on, with our eyes still fixed on the crown of righteousness, who can conceive their joy? They would fain greet us with their approbation; and the day is at hand when they shall do so. Let us only by faith in God, surmount present difficulties, persevere in the heavenly race and win the prize,—their fraternal embrace shall be our welcome to the mansions of eternal bliss.

It is needless to remark that the twofold character thus attached to God's saints and servants of former days, was fitted to minister most blessed encouragement to the Hebrews, and is fitted to minister it to us. It presented their father Abraham before them, as at once God's witness, and the deeply-interested spectator of his children's earthly course. As a witness for God, he was counselling them to put their trust in Him ; as their father both after the flesh and spirit, he was looking down with anxious and observant eyes, to see whether they were following his godly counsel. And his bosom, in which Lazarus found a resting-place, was the reward prepared for them. All this is true of us. That holy patriarch, "the father of all them that believe" (Romans iv. 11), points to his own experience of God's faithfulness, and counsels us to put our trust in Him ; he is also still observing with undiminished interest the earthly course of all his faithful children. His testimony for God is echoed by that of the bright company beside him ; they as well as he, are intently watching us as we run ; they are waiting also with him, to welcome us to the rewards of glory. But their numbers have greatly increased since the words of the text were written ; St. Paul himself has now become one of this cloud of witnesses. His fellow-apostles also, and all the faithful of their days, yea all the faithful from their days to the present hour, swell now the amount of the witnessing company, and add to the number of the spectator-band. It was in St. Paul's days, "so great a cloud ;" it is now "a multitude which no man can number." Surely there is encouragement now to trust in God ; surely there is

encouragement now to persevere in His holy ways. Let us drink then into the spirit of the exhortation of the text, "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also run the race that is set before us."

II. This brings us to the second thing which we proposed to consider, viz. how this race is to be run. We must "lay aside every weight." The usages of the Olympic games, explain this language. He who hoped to win in the foot-race, divested himself of every encumbrance, even to his garments; he also disciplined his body with fasting, that he might carry little weight when he started for the crown. The spiritual meaning of all this is very easily discerned. Every thing is a weight which hinders us in the service of God, and makes us go heavily in our Christian course. The wealth, the honours, the pleasures of the world are such weights; so are its concerns, its business, and its cares. These weights then must be laid aside; the heart must be disengaged from all these things and given to God alone. "Take heed to yourselves," says our Lord, "lest your hearts be overcharged with cares of this life, and so that day come upon you, unawares," (Luke xxi. 34). There are also other weights. Our kindest friends become so, yea our wives, our children, our parents become so, when they would hinder us in any way from doing God's will. And these too must be laid aside; we must surrender the affection of those dearest to us, rather than displease God. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," is the solemn

declaration of our Lord, "is not worthy of me: and "he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not "worthy of me," (Matthew x. 37). And there are other weights still; the body, with its appetites, must be brought into subjection if we would run the heavenly race. St. Paul is our example in this holy discipline of the flesh. "I keep under my body," he tells us, "and bring it into subjection." This language contains an express allusion to those very games of which we have been speaking; for in the immediately-preceding context St. Paul refers to the Olympic runner's discipline of his body as an example for Christian men. And having reminded us that the runner's object was "a corruptible crown," whilst his was "an incorruptible," he adds "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; ...I keep "under my body...lest that by any means, when I have "preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," (I Corinthians ix. 25—27). These words teach us that the flesh is indeed a weight; that its unmortified appetites shall prevent us from winning the heavenly race on the one hand; that its mortification and subjection is the only way of ensuring success on the other.

There is however another requisite to success in this heavenly race, we must lay aside also "the sin which "doth so easily beset us." It is almost needless to say that this is distrust of God. That is the sin to which from the first, man has been chiefly inclined, and which has been chiefly fatal to him. Paradise was lost by it, at the beginning; it forfeited to Israel the pleasant land of promise; it has shut heaven against thousands in every age of the world, and has peopled hell. God

declares that His ways are ways of pleasantness, but His word meets no regard; He assures us of His aid in running in them, but we do not believe the assurance; He promises to us the rewards of glory, but we cannot trust His promise. I speak of the heart of man as it is by nature, and the picture is not overcharged: the spring of confidence in God is broken, and the creatures of His hands cannot trust their Maker's word. This sin must, in measure at least, be laid aside, not merely before we can gain the prize, but before we can begin to run the race. And just in proportion as it is not laid aside, it will rob us of the peace of God, and deprive us of the only consolation which, in times of difficulty and discouragement, can sustain the fainting heart. Let us remember therefore the glorious witness for God which His saints and servants of former ages have borne; as we remember it, let us also trust in Him; and in the strength of this faith, let us run, yea so run that we may obtain.

The text tells us still more plainly how this is to be done; we must run "with patience." The runner in the Olympic games, required to be patient of fatigue, because the race was long. An effort was not enough; that effort required to be sustained if the coveted prize was to be won. It is the same with the heavenly race. The goodness which is "as a morning cloud and as the "early dew," (Hosea vi. 4), the devotedness to God's service which gives way on the first discouragement, will bring no man to the kingdom of heaven. We must persevere in God's ways, in spite of difficulties, in spite of discouragements and hindrances; we must wait

patiently for the rewards of glory. Let us remember Enoch. For three hundred years he walked with God, patiently enduring the contempt of a wicked world, patiently waiting for the recompense of God's reward. At the end of that long period his reward came, he was "translated that he should not see death." And it shall be the same with us if we follow Enoch's steps. Running with patience the race set before us, we shall at length attain the crown. To sum up all then in one word, this race must be run with a heart disengaged from the creature in every form, and stayed on God in the exercise of faith and patience, even that faith which implicitly believes His word, and quietly waits for His own time of fulfilling His promises.

All this was peculiarly applicable to those whom St. Paul was now addressing. Exposed as they then were, to the fury and violence of persecution, if they could not cheerfully consent to surrender property, ease, and reputation for their Redeemer's sake, they were certain to be impeded in their course. Nay, if they valued the affection of those dearest to them on earth, more than the approbation of Him who had loved them and given Himself for them, they could not possibly advance. There is a striking fulness of meaning therefore in the exhortation of St. Paul; every weight was to be laid aside, nothing which hindered success in the race was to be spared, however precious it might be, however dear, and deservedly dear, to its possessor. Least of all, was the corrupt flesh to be pampered, lest the Spirit should be grieved and withdrawn. When all was in consequence, dark and comfortless within,

they would find little strength for contending with the enemy without, and for triumphing over the difficulties which beset every step of their way. St. Paul therefore reminds them, as Christ Himself had done, that they must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow Him. Let us not complain, he says, of the long-continuance of our trials; let us not ask why the Lord delays His coming, and to bring that deliverance which He has promised to His waiting people. Let us remember rather the testimony of those who have gone before us; let this testimony teach us to trust in Him, and let us patiently abide His time. He who has set the race before us, will yet bestow the crown.

III. This brings us to the third subject of consideration, but we may regard it as explained already. "If a man strive for masteries," says St. Paul elsewhere, referring again to the games of antiquity, "yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully," (II Timothy ii. 5). His course was marked out for the runner in the Olympic foot-race, by those who had the direction of the games; if he deviated into a course of his own, he forfeited the crown. God, in like manner, says the Apostle, has set our race before us, i.e. has ordered our circumstances, has prescribed to us our duties, has appointed our trials and ordained the time of their continuance. And if we are dissatisfied with His appointments, and choose a course for ourselves, determining what we shall do, and fixing a period to our sufferings, we are not striving lawfully, and shall forfeit the promised crown. Let us have confidence then, the

Apostle would say, in Him who has ordered the race. He knows our frame, what we are able both to do and to suffer, and He cannot be asking more from us than by His grace we are able to render. The Olympic runner might be spent with toil, but he saw the goal before him and the noble spectators which looked on him, and thought only of the promised reward. And if our course is arduous, let us think only of following the example of His patience. Every step which we take, is bringing us nearer to the promised glory and to the fraternal welcome of the blessed inhabitants of heaven.

He who set a race before the Hebrews, has set a race before us also. Our condition has been appointed, not by chance, but by that heavenly wisdom which cannot err. It has chosen our place for us in the family, whether it be that of husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant. It has chosen our place for us in society, whether that be among the rich or the poor, the noble or the ignoble, the prosperous or the unfortunate. It has appointed also our several callings, and prescribed our several duties. And to run this race, is to recognise the hand of God in our circumstances, and to seek to discharge, as unto Him, the duties which these circumstances require. We shall meet with difficulties and hindrances in every condition; but there is no difficulty nor hindrance which may not be surmounted and overcome by the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart, and by the grace of His Almighty Spirit. Let us be patient then, and seek to approve ourselves to God: He who has appointed the race, knows what

we are able both to do and to bear. Let us be patient, I again say, for our difficulties shall soon be ended. Every step is bringing us nearer to the promised reward, and soon, if we faint not, shall we be gathered to the company of the just now made perfect in the bosom of God.

This can only be however through our following the counsel of the text. We must not be contented with mere admiration of the noble men referred to in the preceding apostolic discourse; we must follow their steps. That we may believe in God with Abraham, we must open our hearts to the holy gospel, and seek to be delivered from "the sin which doth so easily beset us." That we may serve Him with holy Enoch and devoted Elijah, we must seek to have our affections disentangled from the creature and from the cares and engrossments of time, and filled with the hopes and glorious anticipations of eternity. Then shall these sainted patriarchs and prophets recognise us as their fellow-servants, and watch our course on earth with the anxious interest of brethren. And then too, when this world is no more, and all its concerns are remembered as a dream, we shall be privileged with them to see the King in His beauty, and to find in His bosom our eternal rest. The Lord grant it to each one of us!

LECTURE XIX.

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

HEBREWS XII. 2.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

THE Hebrews have been exhorted to run with patience the race set before them; they have been reminded that the goodly company of prophets, martyrs, and men of God who had run the same race in every age, were at once bearing testimony for the Divine faithfulness and watching their course with the intensest interest from above. But they might have complained of want of strength for a race of such difficulty and trial. St. Paul therefore adds in the words which we have just read, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of “faith,” to Jesus who will strengthen from on high. And lest even this consideration should prove insufficient to encourage, he proceeds next to enforce his argument, adding the example of that very Saviour, to whom he bids them look for aid, to the examples of the saints

already brought before them; adding his bitter cross to the list of their endurances, and his glorious crown to the rewards which their faith obtained. So that the subject brought before us by the text, is Jesus THE STRENGTH and EXAMPLE of His people. We shall consider the Saviour in both aspects, and then in the union of the two; applying the subject at once to the Hebrews and ourselves. And may God give us grace to meditate aright on so blessed and glorious a theme!

I. *Looking unto Jesus the author and PERFECTER OF FAITH.*

Let us observe what the Apostle says here; let us observe also what he does not say. He has been speaking of the saints of all former dispensations; he has told the Hebrews and us that they are the spectators of our earthly course, and witnesses on God's behalf for our daily encouragement and consolation. He therefore bids us run, looking to Jesus: his silence forbids us to look to them. We have his warrant for believing that Moses and Elijah are the spectators of our earthly course; we have not his warrant for expecting their assistance in our difficulties and trials. They had strength in which to run their own race, in which to meet their own difficulties; they have none to minister to us. The Apostle draws therefore a marked and evident line of distinction; they are our witnesses, he says, but Jesus is our Strength. And this is made still more evident by the character which he here ascribes to Christ, and in which he bids us look to Him. Ye

who exalt the saints, and speak of their intercession, and bid us expect their aid, when ye can tell us of a saint who is "the author and perfecter of faith," we will gladly look to him and invite others to look along with us. But a character so exalted, it is needless to remark, can belong to a Divine person only. That we may clearly understand this, and be encouraged to look to Him to whom alone it does belong, let us consider it in both its parts.

The Author of faith is He who first taught man to believe in God, who first inspired him with this noble principle. To His grace alone, the faith, obedience, and attainments referred to in the preceding chapter, are to be traced; to the same grace we owe it that any faith and any obedience to God is now found amongst the children of men. This honour belongs to Christ; he is the Author, not of our faith only, but of faith itself; of all the faith that ever has been, of all that is now in the world. There is therefore a very close connection between the name here given to Him, and the discourse which has immediately preceded. The Hebrews might have said to St. Paul, You bid us follow the example of those who have gone before us, but who shall enable us to tread in their sainted footsteps? He who enabled them, is the answer of the words of the text. It was CHRIST who taught righteous Abel to bring his offering in faith, who strengthened Enoch for three hundred years to do God's will, who encouraged Abraham to leave his country and father's house, who inspired Moses with such indomitable courage that he despised the wrath of Pharaoh, who enabled devoted

Elijah to tread the world beneath his feet. You wonder at their attainments, but you forget the secret of their strength,—they looked to their Saviour on high. Look you to the same Saviour, the Apostle would say, now revealed by His name of Jesus; and you shall receive of their strength and participate in their triumphs. And Jesus is not the Author only, He is also the Perfecter of faith. He sustains it now, amid all its trials; He nourishes it daily into strength by larger and yet larger discoveries of His grace and mercy and goodness; He shall present it perfect in the day of His appearing, “unto praise and honour and glory,” (I Peter i. 7). We must not therefore regard the attainments of Abraham or of Moses as objects of admiration merely; if Jesus is the perfecter of faith, there is no attainment which has been made, which may not be made again. “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also “so to walk,” not as Abraham and Moses, but “even “as He walked,” (I John ii. 6). This word has likewise another meaning; it signifies Rewarder. We have had examples of this already. We are told in this epistle that the Captain of His people’s salvation was made “perfect through sufferings,” i.e. was advanced through sufferings, to His perfect reward, (Hebrews ii. 10). We have been told also that those servants of God who lived under all preceding dispensations, could not be “made perfect,” i.e. could not be advanced to their state of final blessedness, till we were ready to partake with them, (Hebrews xi. 40). And in the text, in like manner, Jesus is presented, as at once the inspirer of His people’s faith, and its Rewarder at the great day.

The distributor of the Olympic prize was generally one who had been himself victorious in the games. And who then is worthy to distribute the rewards of glory? He, and He alone "who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame,"—who not only contended in the race, but won it, "and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Surely in looking to Him, we must find all the grace and all the consolation which we need. Do we complain that the race is long, and that our strength begins to fail? Jesus, the inspirer, the nourisher and perfecter of faith, is with us to renew it. Do we complain that our trials are many? They shall soon be ended; already the goal appears in sight, and JESUS STANDING BESIDE IT, WITH THE CROWN OF GLORY IN HIS HAND. In the Olympic contest, as St. Paul reminds us elsewhere, (I Corinthians ix. 24), many ran, but one only received the prize. It is not so with the prize of faith and obedience; it is reserved for all. To this we have the testimony of one who distanced many of his fellows in the race. "Henceforth there is laid up for me," he tells us, "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day:" and "not to me only," he is careful to add, "but unto all them also that love His appearing," (II Timothy iv. 8).

II. To run this race, is to follow Christ's example. Let us then proceed with the text, which presents that example before us:—

Who for the joy that was set before Him endured

the cross, despising the shame, and HAS SAT DOWN at the right hand of the throne of God.

These words present faith to us as it has been so often presented already. We see it in its nature, confidence in God; in its results, obedience to His will; and in its reward, the accomplishment of His promises and the attainment of His final glory. But it must never be forgotten that there is an immeasurable difference between this illustrious example of faith and those to which the preceding discourse refers. In Abraham and Moses we see faith with its results and reward; but they are all in imperfection. In Jesus on the other hand, we see perfect faith, working by perfect obedience and perfect love, and attaining to the perfect reward, THE HONOURS OF ETERNAL GOD-HEAD. Let us consider this particularly. We shall direct our attention, first, to the obedience of Christ; second, to the faith which prompted this obedience; and third, to the reward which this faith and obedience have obtained.

1st. He "endured the cross." This language describes His whole life on earth, at least from the commencement of His ministry. "If any man will come after me" was His word, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," (Luke ix. 23). For He was no sooner set apart to His Father's work by the baptism in Jordan and the voice from heaven, than He began to suffer at the hand of Satan through temptation, and at the hand of man through

reproach, reviling, and persecution. Never was persecution more intense ; it was animated by the deadliest hatred ; the Father's providence, and it alone, preserved His holy child. So that He, its innocent and blameless object, became, as prophetic vision had described Him, " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ;" His visage also was marred more than that of " any man, " and His form more than the sons of men," (Isaiah lii. 14 ; liii. 3). In this then we see His obedience ; He took up this cross daily, denying Himself and following only the will of God. The words of the text however have especial reference to that death on the accursed tree which closed this life of sorrow. We learn from His own mouth what it cost Him to embrace this doom. " O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," was the prayer of suffering nature : " nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," was the submissive acquiescence of love, (Matthew xxvi. 39). The death of Jesus is therefore set forth in all the Scriptures, as the grand demonstration of the implicit character of His obedience. He was " obedient," says St. Paul ; and if we ask, to what extent ?—" Unto death " is the Apostle's answer, " even the death of the cross," (Philippians ii. 8). It was indeed, to use the language of the text, an enduring ; it was indeed a cross which He endured. In His death itself and in its circumstances, all possible elements of suffering were found, yea they were mingled in one agony. SATAN had then peculiar advantage against Him ; " this is your hour," said Jesus to the traitor and his band, " and the power " of darkness," (Luke xxii. 53). And of the brief space

thus allowed to him he made fearful and malignant use, vexing on the one hand, Christ's holy soul by temptation, and stirring up, on the other, His enemies to take His life. And whilst Satan instigated His murder, MAN was the perpetrator of the deed. It was he who betrayed, condemned, and scourged Him; it was he who crucified and slew Him. He also added insult to his cruelty, crowning Him with thorns and setting Him at nought, buffeting and spitting on Him, giving Him gall for His meat, and offering Him, in His death-thirst, vinegar to drink. And neither man nor Satan could have thus prevailed against Him, if GOD had not delivered Him into their hands. Here was the climax of His woe; His own faithful and ever-loving Father withdrew His protection from Him in that awful hour. Who may tell the endurance to which this combination of suffering subjected our blessed Redeemer! On a subject so sacred let us hear Himself. One Psalm especially contains the experience of the cross; and as the Redeemer pours forth in it the fulness of His afflicted spirit, we find distinct reference to all these causes of woe. The supplicating cry, "Save me from the lion's mouth," indicates but too plainly the presence of Satan on that awful occasion; whilst the complaint "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet;" points with equal plainness, to those who nailed Him to the tree. Nor does He forget the principal cause of His sorrow. "My God," He exclaims, "why hast THOU forsaken me? Why art "THOU so far from helping me?...O my God, I cry...

“but THOU hearest not.” It has been already pointed out that the Apostle has introduced the example of Christ after that of those sainted men to whom the preceding discourse has reference. And I know nothing in all Scripture more affecting than to find the Redeemer in this very Psalm, making mention of those saints of old time, and as one apparently left and utterly forsaken of God, placing Him beneath them. “Our fathers trusted in thee,” He says: “they trusted, and thou didst deliver them...But I am a worm and no man,” (Psalm xxii. 1—21). It did indeed seem as if He were utterly forsaken when He was left unaided in these murderous hands, till they spoiled Him of His precious life and laid Him a dead man in the grave. For to such a depth did the Prince of life descend.

2nd. This obedience was the result of faith, “for the joy that was set before Him.” These words again suggest the image of the preceding verse. In the games which are there referred to, a crown at the end of the race, was “the joy set before” the runner. And often, when wearied nature was just sinking through exhaustion, the hope of obtaining it, inspired him with fresh resolution and made him run patiently on. Jesus in like manner, had a race appointed to Him, even the way of His Father’s commandments, (Psalm cxix. 32). “I came down from heaven,” He tells us, “not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me,” (John vi. 38). The way was rugged and painful; it became more so, every step; and the last steps were the most painful of all. But a “joy was set before”

the runner. He had the Father's SOLEMN ASSURANCE that He should be raised out of the dust of death, and exalted to the right hand of power as His people's Lord and Saviour. And relying on this assurance with PERFECT FAITH, Jesus ran on though faint and weary, and finally won the race. He was indeed weary, for we find Him, in the garden, "sorrowful and very heavy," (Matthew xxvi. 37); He was indeed faint, for there appeared to Him, in that awful moment, "an angel from "heaven, strengthening Him," (Luke xxii. 43). It was not the body, but the spirit which needed strength. The ministering angel would doubtless remind Him of the light which should succeed the overwhelming darkness, of the joy which should swallow up the sorrow. And these blessed anticipations sustained the afflicted One, and bore Him through His agony. In the exquisite language of the poet,—

" Hope's precious pearl, in sorrow's cup,
Unmelted at the bottom lay;
To shine again, when all drunk up
The bitterness should pass away."

But our blessed Redeemer, in the closing scene of His eventful life, had more than mere sorrow to bear. His sorrow was of that peculiar kind which tries the strength of faith; and faith alone therefore enabled Him to endure it. He was delivered into the murderous hands of Satan and wicked men, and at the moment when help was most needed, that help was utterly withdrawn. Perfect faith alone could have endured such a dealing. His truest-hearted servant would have utterly given way in circumstances which constrained even Him to

ask "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But He knew the reason of it all. And His absolute confidence in the Father's never-changing faithfulness, carried Him victorious and triumphant through that dark and dreadful hour. That victory and triumph appeared at the moment of His lowest depression, when He was hanging between two malefactors, listening to the execrations of His enemies, and beholding before Him the opening grave. He proved by His language to one of those who died beside Him, that He was just as assured at that moment of receiving the crown of glory, as He is assured of it now, when sitting at the right hand of God.

Perfect faith can dwell only in a heart of perfect love. The perfect faith of Jesus dwelt in such a heart; that perfect love was found in Him which cast out all suspicion, and the very semblance of doubt and fear, (I John iv. 18; I Corinthians xiii. 7). The text bears witness to this love; "the joy that was set before Him" was not a selfish joy. He knew that by His endurance of the cross and consequent exaltation to glory, the name of the Father should be glorified, and an innumerable multitude of man's ruined family, should be saved and blessed eternally. His own words declare this. "Except a corn of wheat" He said to His disciples, "fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We know also from Himself, what He considered fruit; "I" He continued, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," (John xii. 24, 32). By laying down His precious life and taking it again, He was to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered

"abroad," (John xi. 52), and to fulfil the Father's eternal purpose of bringing "many sons unto glory," (Hebrews ii. 10). And the sure hope of this blessed consummation was the constraining motive of all His labours, sufferings and toils. Inspired by this faith and love, He not only endured the cross, but endured it "despising the shame," i.e. esteeming as unworthy of a thought, its most painful and bitter accompaniment. But can this be? Is it possible that He who complains, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;" who complains again, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness," (Psalm xxii. 7; lxix. 20): is it possible, I repeat, that He esteemed shame as nothing? Not as nothing in itself, but as nothing in comparison of the joy. How exceedingly precious to His spirit then must that joy have been! How entire, how deep, how devoted must have been the love to the Father and to us which could make that meek and gentle One, whose tender heart reproach was daily breaking, esteem reproach unworthy of a thought! We see in this the power and wondrous excellency of love. Truly it "endureth all things," (I Corinthians xiii. 7); "many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned," (Canticles viii. 7). How excellent must it have appeared in the Father's sight, when seen in perfection in Jesus! His perfect faith, dwelling in such a heart, may be fitly compared, in the imagery of the book of Proverbs, to the apple of gold set in the picture of silver.

3rd. We must now speak of the reward which this faith and obedience have received—"and has sat down "on the right hand of the throne of God." This seat infers equality with Jehovah, and yet Jesus has assumed it by command and as the reward of faith. For He to whom it appertained by everlasting right, consented to descend from it for a season, that He might claim it again, as the reward of goodness. Goodness indeed!—"worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Goodness indeed!—in what He did, He was thinking, not of Himself but of others. For by descending into our mortal nature, by suffering, bleeding and dying on the earth, He was able to purge our sins. The Father promised to reward Him for this act of wondrous mercy by raising Him from the dust of death and exalting in His person, to the eternal throne, that humanity which He was pleased to assume. Continually in the psalms, do we find the faithful Father put in mind of this promise by the believing Son. Such are the solemn words quoted by St. Peter on Pentecost, as those of his Master,—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell, neither “shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption: “thou wilt shew me the path of life, at thy right hand “are pleasures for evermore,” (Psalm xvi. 10, 11). And the morning of the third day was a witness with the slopes of Olivet, that this confidence was not in vain. The lowly sleeper in Joseph’s sepulchre, “brought “again from the dead, by the glory of the Father,” (Romans vi. 4), burst the bands of death and cast the dust of the grave from off Him. He was also exalted in soul and body to that right hand of everlasting joy, because He “judged Him faithful who had promised.”

All Scripture bears harmonious witness to this blessed mystery of our faith. St. Paul tells us of the working of God's mighty power "which He wrought "in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and "seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly "places," (Ephesians i. 19, 20; original). And we read in a Psalm which can apply to Christ alone, "The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord...Thou "preventest Him with the blessings of goodness: thou "settest a crown of pure gold on His head...Honour "and majesty hast thou laid upon Him...Thou hast "made Him most blessed for ever...FOR THE KING "TRUSTETH IN THE LORD," (Psalm xxi. 1—7). These things make it possible to speak of *the reward* of Jesus, though He be the Son of God, and to speak of it as the reward *of faith*. Deeper is not than He descended, and it was faith which lifted Him from the depths: higher is not than He has now ascended, and it was faith which opened the way.

The human mind is lost in the contemplation of this mighty subject. We know not at which to wonder most, the depth of the Divine condescension, or the height to which human nature has been raised; THE SON OF THE EVERLASTING *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, or the *Son of Man* SEATED BETWEEN THE CHERUBIM. It shews in a very striking manner, that "while the honours of Jesus are the purchase of His "work, they prove His person to be Divine." For the honours of the text are "Divine honours, and could "not have been granted to any to whom they appertained "not by birth-right." It proves in a manner equally

striking, the truth of the inspired statement that "God "is Love," (I John iv. 8). An illustrious stranger once visited our earth, and His work was to do good. He went about giving eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, hearing to the deaf, and power of speech to the dumb, (Acts x. 38). And this life of love found its termination in a death of unspeakable mercy: He gave Himself for man's salvation, bearing his sins in His own body, on the tree. Who is He, we ask, who has loved so well? Let us repair with the women to the sepulchre, we shall find that the grave could not hold Him; let us take our stand with the disciples on Mount Olivet, we shall see Him ascend on high. Let the eye of faith still follow Him and mark how He is received above. Cherubim and seraphim make way, and HE TAKES THE SEAT OF GOD. We discover now who our illustrious visitant has been, we find to our amazement that "the world was made by Him, and the world "knew Him not," (John i. 10). Oh that the poet's wish were realized, that we could

"See a bard all fire,
Touched with a coal from heaven, assume the lyre,
And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
With more than mortal music on his tongue,
That He who died below and reigns above
Inspires his song, and that HIS NAME IS LOVE."

Thus it is then that the Son of God and man has attained the glory with which He is now invested. But here I must pause: of the glory itself I am not able to speak. Heavenly prophets have sung, and inspired apostles have discoursed of it, and the devotion of the

grateful Church has poured forth its very soul in eloquence. But still, after all that has been written and said and sung, it cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive it. We may follow however as far as Scripture leads. St. Paul tells us of high exaltation, of a name above every name, of every knee bowing, and every tongue confessing, (Philippians ii. 9--11). As we listen to the notes of the golden harps above, we hear power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, ascribed to "the Lamb that was slain," (Revelation v. 12). And there is another harp before which these harps are silent.

"Enthroned upon a hill of light
A heavenly minstrel sings,
And sounds unutterably bright
Burst from the golden strings:
Who could have thought so FAIR A FORM
Once bent beneath an earthly storm!"

Let us catch the notes of that harp, let us listen to "the song of the Lamb," (Revelation xv. 3). "Thou hast turned for me," he says, "my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; O Jehovah my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever!" (Psalms xxx. 11, 12). Such is the reward which perfect faith and love have received from the generous hand of God, the reward of Him "who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

III. But this example of Christ discourages, it may be said; it is too perfect that we should ever

attempt to follow it. It would discourage indeed if it stood alone. In the text however it does not stand alone: Jesus is presented as at once **THE EXAMPLE** and **STRENGTH** of His people. It is when we contemplate the Saviour in this twofold aspect, that the remembrance of Him is so full of consolation. We are told that He is our strength; that He can sustain us in every trial; that He can help us in every difficulty; that He can make us more than conquerors in the end. But what pledge have we of these things? Our pledge is His example; the conquests which He has achieved in His own person, over difficulty, danger, and death. This banishes despondency and fills the soul with hope. For if He who "endured the cross, despising the shame," be indeed in us "the author and perfecter of faith," we need no other consolation. This is evidently St. Paul's object in introducing Christ's example here. It is not merely that it is perfect, whilst those adduced before, were imperfect; it is the perfect example of one who can enable us to follow Him. Even had Abraham and Elijah been perfect, they could not have assisted us. But Jesus was not only perfect Himself, was not only never overcome, but has promised to exert on our behalf, that almighty strength in which He triumphed. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," was His assurance to the disciples; "but be of good cheer," He added, "I have overcome the world," (John xvi. 33). You have seen me, He would say, when the world has smiled; you have seen me, when it has frowned; I have been unseduced in the one case, unterrified in the other. Be of good cheer therefore, for I will communicate the

same strength to you. My victory is thus the pledge of yours; because I have overcome, you shall overcome also.

This subject is so exceedingly important that I feel constrained to dwell on it. We are continually reminded in the New Testament that we are the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Now that which nerves the soldier's arm and strengthens his heart as he goes forth to battle, is not so much the multitude of the army of which he forms a part, as the character of the Chief whom he is following. If he is one who has never been defeated, his very name, and above all, his presence, acts like a charm on the soldiers whom he leads;

"One blast upon his bugle-horn
Is worth a thousand men."

God Himself appealed to this principle, to encourage Israel to war. In their first battle, which was with Amalek in Rephidim, Moses by His command, stood on the top of the hill in their sight, with the rod of God in his hand. That rod in the hand of their unconquered leader, had always been the signal of victory and triumph; it had turned the Nile into blood, it had smitten Egypt with pestilence, it had drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. Israel saw him now lift it in the battle; and surely, they said, he has not lifted it for the first time in vain. Animated therefore by the sight, they fought and conquered; "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword," (Exodus xvii. 8—13). Now it is in the spiritual, as in the natural; and hence the strength of "looking unto Jesus." The only relation which our leader has ever borne to the

enemy, has been that of a triumphant conqueror. Satan assaulted Him in the wilderness, but was unable to prevail; he assaulted Him in Gethsemane, but was shamefully defeated; and though he seemed to succeed on Calvary, it was in appearance only. The death which he had devised for the blessed One proved the destruction of his empire; Jesus spoiled the powers of darkness, triumphing over them in His cross, (Colossians ii. 15). And as the calm countenance of a hitherto victorious Chief encourages the soldiers in the heat of conflict, so to realize the presence of Jesus, and by that faith which can gaze upon invisibles, to see Him beside us, cannot but reassure, cannot but sustain the heart. I am indeed sorely pressed, the tempted Christian reasons, but I am under the conduct of One, who was able to endure the cross; who, despite of the powers of darkness, prevailed to ascend to the right hand of the heavenly throne; of One who never was vanquished yet, and cannot be vanquished now. And thus in moments of deepest despondency, when all hope is lost and Satan seems sure of victory, let faith but realize the triumphs of Him who thus trod him under foot, and realize also the presence of that leader with us, and we shall spring from the ground exclaiming, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, "I shall arise."

The lesson which this precious subject was fitted to teach the Hebrews, is equally needful for us. If it shews us how the Holy One of God believed and loved and suffered, and through victorious faith obtained the promised glory, it tells us also that in all this, He is

our pattern. Let us then be found looking to Him, that we may follow His steps. Let us ask His Spirit ; to ask, is to receive : let us ask His heart of faith, love, and obedience ; it shall be freely given. Let not the glory in which He sits above, make us afraid to do so ; the robe of glory covers a heart of tenderness and love. "Fear not," was His word to the terrified disciple, when because of that glory, he "fell at His feet as "dead," (Revelation i. 17): Fear not, is His word to all who draw nigh unto Him now. Drawing nigh and receiving of His Spirit, we shall know Him as the Author and Perfecter of faith, and another day, as its Rewarder. As surely as the Father has crowned and exalted Him, so surely shall He crown His people, so surely shall He set them on high. No creature indeed may ever sit where He is sitting now ; but He shall yet assume His own throne, the throne of the Son of David, and His saints shall sit beside Him. May it please Him, of His gracious goodness, to hasten that glorious day ; and may we be counted worthy to share in its unspeakable and endless joy !

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NOTE

ON THE PASSION OF OUR BLESSED LORD.

WHAT WAS *THE FORSAKING* OF CALVARY?

THE last of these lectures has been devoted, as the reader has seen, to the Cross and Passion of the Blessed One. I desire now to say something more than the limits of a lecture permit, in elucidation of this sacred subject.

What was the nature of this Passion? What were its ingredients?

There is a view which is not uncommon, and which I shall state as distinctly as I can; and where I am constrained to dissent from it, I shall give my reasons from Holy Scripture.

God threatened Death as the wages of sin; and man by sin, incurred the fearful penalty. This Death was threefold; temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Christ, as man's substitute, bore this threefold penalty. He bore temporal death, for He died on the Cross, and was buried. He bore also an equivalent for spiritual and eternal Death. For these consist in separation from God, from His manifested presence and from His favour. AND THE FATHER WITHDREW THESE FROM CHRIST ON CALVARY. HE HID HIS FACE FROM HIM, AND FORSOOK HIM FOR OUR SAKES. Hence, the lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Psalm xxii. 1).

This forsaking of the Son by the Father, has been characterized by some who take this view, as "*the inner heart of atonement.*"

Others speak of it as "*the real atonement*," the Cross and Grave being but the outward manifestations of the unknown and awful passion.

Is this view correct then—was the hiding of the countenance of the Father, a part, and such a part of the passion of the Son? It is the most solemn question in the whole range of Christian theology. But there is no question which we may not ask, where Scripture gives a clear and unambiguous answer. And if we approach this question with reverence and godly fear, the answer cannot fail to be profitable. It will increase in the devout mind what St. Paul esteemed above all price, "the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord" (Philippians iii. 8).

Now this view, tried by Scripture, appears to me to fail.

1st. Negative evidence is against it. It is the invariable practice of the holy Apostles to take up the several circumstances of the Gospel-narrative, to explain and illustrate them, to press them on the heart and conscience. They do this in their discourses, they do it still more in their epistles. But from the commencement of the Book of the Acts to the end of the Book of Revelation, there is *no allusion whatever* to this most solemn and awful act of all God's wondrous providence. It is quite otherwise with uninspired preachers. They refer to it largely, commending it as the very crown and glory of the Saviour's love, that He was forsaken of God for our sakes. But no inspired teacher speaks in this manner. Not St. Paul in all his fourteen epistles; nor St. Peter; nor St. John; nor St. James; nor St. Jude. Guided as they were by the Holy Ghost "*into the whole truth*,"* they were evidently unaware of any thing endured by their Master, which answers to such a thought.

2nd. Positive evidence is yet more against this view. It is evidence moreover, of the most sacred kind; the Ever-Blessed Sufferer Himself declares that He was not forsaken.

We have an account from St. Paul of his answer before Nero. "No man stood with me," he says, "but all men forsook me. How-

* See Dr. Pusey's striking rendering of John xvi. 13, in his "*Eirenicon*."

"be it the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." (II Timothy, iv. 16, 17.) With such words before us, we should never think of saying—the Apostle's bitterest sorrow was, not that friends forsook him, but that his Master hid His face from him. Why then do we say so, in that Master's own case? For He uses language of precisely similar import. "Ye shall be scattered," He said to His disciples, "every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; AND "YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME." (John xvi. 32.)

Let us carefully note these words. They intimate a contrast, as marked and decided as that of the words of St. Paul. It is between two parties—those who should forsake Him in His hour of need, and HIM whose faithful love should abide with Him to the end.

Let us mark what these words cover.

They cover *Gethsemane*. Our Lord was entering that garden when He uttered them. The Father was with Him then during the hours of agony which followed. We grievously miss the mind of God when we conceive of Gethsemane as the scene of penal wrath. It was in truth, the very opposite—the most endeared communion with the Blessed Father which the Man of Sorrows had ever known. He that runs, may read this on the face of the evangelic record. Friends and disciples were forsaking the afflicted One. His enemies—and He knew it—were already on their way to take Him, to lead Him to prison, to judgment, to death. In these sad circumstances, He turned to His only remaining refuge—"He fell on His face and prayed." The Tempter too was beside Him (John xiv. 30), striving—oh, so earnestly!—to give his own direction to that prayer, to make it take the form of "save me from this hour;" "twelve legions of angels," he whispered, await Thy slightest word. Hence the "agony and "bloody sweat" of which our solemn litany makes mention. As this agony increased in intensity—the weak flesh contending with the willing spirit—the Son sought the shelter of the Father's arms, pressed closer and yet closer to the Father's bosom, "prayed more "earnestly." And these arms—dare we doubt it?—were opened to receive Him; they clasped Him to their embrace; yea, they were

folded with all the ineffable tenderness of Deity round His fainting child!! The consolation of Gethsemane thus swallowed up its agony. That consolation cheered the prostrate One—sustained His spirit—enabled Him to look with calmness on the awful prospect before Him—braced Him to high resolve, and at last, made Him more than conqueror. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall not I drink it?”—these words spoken as He left the garden, proclaimed the contest over, and the victory won.

They cover *every step of the way which led from Gethsemane to Calvary*. For as our Lord was leaving the garden, the darker part of His words was fulfilled, “the disciples forsook Him and fled.” Surely then the brighter part was fulfilled also. Judas and his band took and led Him away; He was “alone” in their midst without a human friend. “Alone” when He stood before the High Priest and the Sanhedrim, and was by them adjudged to death, buffeted and spitted on. “Alone” when Pilate questioned Him, took Him and scourged Him. “Alone” when Herod and his men of war set Him at nought, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and mocking, bowed the knee. Finally, He was “alone” when they hurried Him to Golgotha and Calvary. But as we follow the lonely Saviour, we still hear Him say, “Not alone, the Father is with me.” Hence His marvellous endurance, He was “seeing Him who is invisible.”

These words cover finally *Calvary itself*. And here their testimony is corroborated by other and much larger words. We have a detailed account of Calvary’s awful experiences from the lips of the Blessed Sufferer in that wondrous prophetic psalm, the xxii. His enemies were to environ Him round, they were to pierce His hands and feet, they were to part His raiment among them and cast lots on His vesture, they were to mock His dying agonies with all the bitterness of fiendish malice. And these things, I need not say, literally came to pass. But the same faithful Love which stood by Him in Gethsemane, when friends forsook Him, was to lift the light of its countenance on Him, when enemies gnashed with their teeth. Its interposition was to be so manifest, its aid so gracious and abundant, that the Saviour calls on all the faithful throughout the world to give thanks to God along with

Him. "*Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; He hath not despised the affliction of the afflicted*; NEITHER HATH HE HID HIS FACE FROM HIM." Which came to pass also in all its fulness of conscious blessedness and peace; witness His own words already so repeatedly referred to—"THE FATHER IS WITH ME." Strange then that we should be considering the question whether the Father hid His face from Christ on Calvary! The Christian who has not given special thanks to His name that He lifted on the Redeemer in that awful hour the light of His gracious countenance, has never yet responded to his dying Saviour's appeal!! And so we read immediately, in the closing words of the psalm, "the story of the Lord shall be told to them that come after."* Blessed, wondrous story, "such as angels love to hear!"—the story of filial devotion, of fatherly faithfulness and truth. Well may it be told to them that come after, even to all who would serve God, while the generations of the earth endure. The faith that never flagged, the love that never cooled, the obedience that was indeed "unto death," were not for an instant forgotten. In that loving One's darkest hour, in His direst agony, the Father never left Him alone. He had done always, He was doing then, the thing that entirely pleased Him (John viii. 29).

What mean then those memorable words with which the psalm opens "my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Their meaning is not far to seek. Most commentators are of opinion that our Lord uttered the whole psalm on the Cross, though from the exhausted condition of the dying Sufferer, the first words only were distinctly audible. Let us take the psalm as a whole then, and read it also in the light of the other Scriptures of God.

From the moment that Jesus appeared in the world as the Father's commissioned servant, testifying of that world "that the deeds thereof were evil," He was surrounded by implacable and bitter enemies. His words and deeds of love filled their hearts

* See this beautiful rendering of verse 31st, in "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged." Macmillan.

with madness, they sought day by day to destroy Him. But the Father's protecting arm was round His "holy child"; their counsels were confounded, their arm was paralyzed. It was not however to be always so. As His ministry approached its appointed termination, their hope of accomplishing their fell purpose revived. "Let us persecute and take Him" they said one to another, "*God hath forsaken Him, there is none to deliver Him*" (Psalm lxxi. 11). That hour seemed now to have arrived. They had seized on Him whom they esteemed their victim, and nailed Him to the accursed tree. And their congratulations were heard round the Cross. "He trusted in God, that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him; He said, 'I am the Son of God,' (Psalm xxii. 9, 10). 'My God, my God,' said in answer the dying Saviour, my trusted, my faithful, my loving Father, *why, oh why hast Thou left me in these murderous hands?*

But how, it may be asked, could our Blessed Master use such words? Nothing could take Him by surprise; He knew from the beginning, all that was to come on Him. It only shews how truly He had been "made man" (Nic. Creed), and how *intensely human* all His feelings were. Trial contemplated afar off, is one thing; when it actually comes upon us, it is quite another. We all know that we must die; the certainty of Death has passed into a proverb. But this gives no indication of what our feelings shall be when we are actually surrounded by its darkness and its fear. So it was with Him whom St. Paul calls with such loving emphasis, "the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy, ii. 5). He had anticipated the sorrows of Calvary from the very commencement of His ministry, and had spoken of them with calmness, to His disciples. But now "the hour was come" (John xvii. 1); these sorrows were actually upon Him. And the lamentable cry before us, was but the expression of how terrible He felt them to be.

Was the Saviour unaware then of the reason of His Death? No; He asks the question that that reason may appear. "But 'Thou art holy, oh Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,' (v. 3). It is all right; Thou judgest righteously. I came into the world to die, that sin might be taken away, and all righteous-

ness fulfilled. And the darkness of this fearful hour shall not last for ever. "Our fathers trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them. They hoped in Thee and were holpen; they put their trust in Thee and were not confounded." And so shall it be with me, though now "a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people," (v. 4, 5). Light shall swallow up the darkness that now surrounds me; sorrow shall be turned into joy. A seed shall rise up to call the Lord blessed; I shall see in them of "the travail of my soul, and be satisfied." "All the ends of the world shall remember themselves and be turned to the Lord; and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee," (v. 27). And so the Psalm concludes in strains of ecstatic thanksgiving.

Such was the forsaking of Calvary, such were to be—such have been—its glorious results.

It is of the utmost importance, if we would understand this sacred subject, that we discriminate carefully between the immediate acts of God, and those of man unconsciously working out His will. Let us listen to the Apostle Peter on the memorable day of Pentecost. He is full of the Holy Ghost, and is beholding in that uncreated light, the great act of Atonement as by the glance of intuition. The Father's part appears first—"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"; man's part appears second—"ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," (Acts ii 23). We must not confound this order, and speak or think of the Blessed Father as *with His own hand* bruising His holy child. There is a touching remark of Dr. Andrew Bonar in his exposition of Leviticus. It relates to the Mosaic ordinance about the turtle-dove, when offered in sacrifice—"thou shalt wring off his head." "Rude violence" he says, "to a creature so loving and gentle!" Who used the rude violence of Calvary to the Father's turtle-dove? Let the Saviour's prayer answer—"deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove to the multitude of the wicked," (Psalm lxxiv. 19). The hour came when it was needful so to do. The Father "spared not His own Son." And the Son spared not Himself. It is not for us to tell the concentrated anguish which was expressed in the brief utterance—"the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

No one who has read on the subject, will require to be told to what an extent this distinction has been ignored. One theological writer tells us that what Christ suffered from man, was little in comparison to what awaited Him "*when He fell into His Father's hands.*" And if we ask what these hands were, and when they were laid on the holy One, another leads us to Gethsemane. The Father and Son are *alone* in that gloomy garden; the traitor and his band have not arrived, nor is man at all upon the field. The Father is bruising the Son for the sins He came to expiate; the Son is *bleeding and "grovelling beneath His iron rod"*!! I believe all such representations to be contrary to the Scriptures of truth.

On a subject so vital, let me not for a moment be misunderstood. That the Blessed One bore for us the curse of His Father's holy law, is most certain truth. No Christian can forget St. Paul's words to the Galatians—" *He was made a curse for us,*" (iii. 13); or to the Corinthians—" *He hath made Him a sin-offering for us,*" (II Corinthians vi. 21); or to the Romans—" *God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering, condemned sin,*" (viii. 3); or to the Ephesians—" *Christ hath loved us and "given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God,"*" (Ephesians v. 2). Only let us remember that that curse was Death, and that MAN inflicted that Death. It was not God that "killed the Prince of life." Our Blessed Master was in the very bloom of opening manhood: sickness had never touched His sacred Person, yea health was going forth from His very garments when man came upon Him and slew Him. And yet He fell truly "into His Father's hands" on Calvary. For what are the hands of God? Let Scripture answer—"MEN are thy hand, oh Lord, men of the world," (Psalm xvii. 14). "Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel"—these were the Father's hands. They did "whatsoever His hand and counsel determined before to be done," (Acts iv. 27, 28). The act indeed was human, but the counsel was Divine.

One word more in elucidation of a subject so full of glory. Our Blessed Lord, it is needful to point out, accepted His Death in two distinct aspects. As inflicted by man, it was the consummation of injustice and wrong. He took it patiently, being led as

a lamb to the slaughter, and as the sheep dumb before its shearers. But as appointed by God, it was the very perfection of righteousness. Death and the grave were His just sentence on sin. And standing before Him as the Head and Representative of Humanity and having perfect sympathy with His righteousness, the Lord Jesus consented, yea desired to die. His Death like His life, had thus a character all its own; *He consciously accepted Death as the curse pronounced on sin*. None of us may tell what such consciousness was to Him. Surely the pall which fell on nature in the three hours' darkness, may be taken as a symbol of the darkness of His soul. For He was then realizing the curse; realizing sin which had deserved the curse; above all, realizing Himself as the Bearer of that curse. "The Lord had laid on Him the iniquities of us all," He had taken them as His. We need none to explain to us such words as these—"mine iniquities have gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me to bear. There is no rest in my flesh because of Thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones by reason of my sin," (Psalm xxxviii. 3, 4). They suit only too well the fearful darkness of Calvary.

But does not wrath imply the countenance of God turned away? Yes, if the Sufferer had been *the real criminal*. But He was the innocent One, bearing the sins of others. The light of that countenance therefore bore Him through the darkness which surrounded Him on every side. The Father entirely delighted in His act of wondrous self-sacrifice, it was the object of His ineffable complacency—"a sweet-smelling savour," (Ephesians v. 2). Friends might desert, and enemies gnash their teeth; love found its stay and consolation in love's approving smile. Not that the Blessed Jesus was ever a stranger to this smile; it had been His from everlasting, (John xvii. 24). But with His every act of devoted obedience it had beamed on Him with a softer and sweeter radiance. Till at last He went forth to die, to vindicate the Father's name and do honour to His holy law. Paternal love then reached its climax, and Calvary itself was cheered by its heavenly light. According as it is written "*therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life,*" (John x. 17).

Were Atonement apprehended as I believe the Bible presents

it, this sacred subject would be at once made plain. The view which represents God's original threatening as involving a three-fold Death—temporal, spiritual, and eternal, savours much more of the cumbrousness of human system than of "the simplicity that is in Christ." Spiritual Death is simply a state of sin, (Ephesians ii. 1). And as for sin's eternal consequences, they were not revealed for ages afterwards. "Dying, thou shalt die" was the original threatening. That threatening passed into sentence, alas too soon. It then became, as we all know, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return"—Death and the grave. "Sin entered into the world, and Death by sin; and so Death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned," (Romans v. 12). The gift of life is forfeited, because he that has received it, is a sinner.

The world has had experience of this sentence and of the sin which originally provoked it, for these sad Six Thousand Years. It has experience of it now. The law of love is still broken and still avenged, for Death reigns over all, and everywhere, crushing human hearts and desolating human families. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away,"—falleth into the grave, for that is the end of man's high aspirations, his glory, his enterprise, his hope. "The crown is fallen from our head, woe unto us, for we have sinned."

Into a world so conditioned the Son of God was pleased to come—as a man and a Saviour. He dealt first with *the precept*. He lifted up the blessed law of love out of the dust of dishonour with which ages of rebellion had covered it, and made it honourable by keeping it. As man's Head and Representative, He kept it in His own Person, kept it in thought, word and deed, kept it "unto Death, even the death of the Cross." It was no transcendental law He kept, but "the old commandment which man had from the beginning," "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." But that He should have done this—that *He should have stooped from Heaven to do it*—that He should have done it *in the midst of difficulty, trouble and sorrow*, has gained for Him "a name which is above every name." THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST is the theme of Heaven's praise for ever.

He dealt next with *the penalty*. "Christ died" says St. Paul, "according to the Scriptures, and was buried." That Death and Burial, like the obedience which had preceded them, had a character all their own. He accepted them as the curse which God had pronounced on sin. He laid down our forfeited life, leaving it in Joseph's sepulchre; and out of the depths of that grave He brought us the everlasting life. That HE THE SON OF THE BLESSED, should have stooped so inconceivably low—that HE should have accepted man's death under every possible aggravation of anguish, pain and shame—that HE should have been indebted to Roman charity even for the kindness of a grave, has given to these acts such wondrous efficacy. It has also taught all Heaven to sing for ever "Worthy is the Lamb THAT WAS SLAIN."*

The words of Isaiah (xlii. 17), "The Lord is well-pleased for 'His righteousness' sake; He shall magnify the law, and make 'it honourable,'" contain God's own definition of Atonement and its results. And they have been literally accomplished. The law is magnified now, in its precept and in its penalty, and made for ever honorable. And the Lawgiver is well-pleased. The Saviour's work of glory was no sooner finished than this was made abundantly manifest. For God broke the silence of Four Thousand Years, and proclaimed as He still proclaims, His gospel for every creature—"through this man, the forgiveness of sins."

* All thoughtful Theologians are coming more and more to see that it was not so much *the amount of suffering endured as the dignity of the Person enduring it*, that constituted Atonement. Thus Canon Liddon—"one sigh from the Redeemer's heart, one 'lash on His sacred person, would have redeemed a world.'"

This is stronger language however than I feel myself at liberty to use. "*Without shedding of blood*, there is no remission." But common blood—the blood of bulls and goats, the blood of mere man for his fellow—is expressly declared insufficient. We are surely therefore at liberty to say that it was the smiting unto death, "TAM CARI CAPITIS," which made the Atonement of the Lord Jesus what we believe it to have been.

IN endeavouring to elucidate this sacred subject—the most sacred to which the mind of man can address itself—I have adhered, as the reader will bear me witness, very closely to what is written. If, notwithstanding this, he disagrees with any of my conclusions, let me ask him at least to suspend his judgment till he has compared them with the Bible. I can have no object but to lead him there. The priceless privilege of every Protestant, which nothing must tempt us for a moment to surrender, is **FREE THOUGHT WITHIN THE LIMITS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE**. Protestant truth without this, will soon degenerate into mere tradition.

THE END.

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